

Weekend

FINANCIAL TIMES

Weekend FT
Evangelists on the
radio talk show

SECTION II

World Business Newspaper

Japan Tobacco to face first damages suit from smokers

The first lawsuit brought by smokers against Japan Tobacco, the state-owned company that dominates the country's cigarette market, has been launched this week. The action by five Japanese - four smokers and one non-smoker - has created new concern for JT and for the finance ministry, which had hoped to bolster state revenues by selling much of its 81 per cent stake later this year. Page 22

Zhirinovsky joins Russian presidency race: Liberal Democratic party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky has announced he will run for the Russian presidency in June. The 49-year-old ultra-nationalist is the third candidate registered after Communist party chief Gennady Zyuganov and President Boris Yeltsin. Trading insults. Page 2

Takeover rumours hit UK market trading

At the close of a busy trading session, the last of the old tax year, the FT-SE 100 index posted a 30.5 gain at 3,755.6, leaving it only 25.7 below its all-time closing peak and 36.6 beneath its record intra-day high. Over a week which has seen the stock market buzzing with takeover rumours, the index has climbed 55.9 points or 1.5 per cent. Dealers said they expect the London market to attract a flurry of programme trade activity next week when the big investment institutions begin to invest their second quarter new asset allocations and shift their existing portfolios. Page 19: World Stocks, Page 17

Faulty Aids test causes anguish in Europe: Thousands of people who were cleared of having the HIV virus that causes Aids will face new checks after the withdrawal of a test kit found to be unreliable. The UK Department of Health said a "small proportion" were falsely given negative results in the test manufactured by Chicago-based drug company Abbott Laboratories and 40,000 would have to be retested. Dutch authorities said 50,000 Dutch people would need to be retested.

Smarter champions EU on eastern mission: Jacques Santer, European Commission president, completed a four-day trip to the Czech Republic and Hungary, greeting enthusiasm for the European Union. Both countries have applied to join the EU. Page 2

Frenchman dies of CJD: A single case of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) comparable to those which sparked the recent "mad cow" crisis in Britain has been reported in France. The case involved a 25-year-old man in Lyon, central France, who died in January. Beef crisis. Page 4

Fokker, the bankrupt Dutch aircraft maker, said that Saab of Sweden and Samsung of South Korea had discussed making a joint approach for the company, but that they failed to reach agreement and ultimately decided not to bid. Page 5

BET claims "dirty tactics" by Rentschler: BET, the business services group fighting a £1.9bn (\$2.8bn) takeover bid by Rentschler, has complained to the Takeover Panel in Britain over what it claims are dirty tactics by its rival. Page 6

UK stops ostrich farming scheme: British ostrich farmers offered homes to thousands of birds stranded in Britain after the UK government's closure of an investment company. Page 22

Rowe, the UK subsidiary of Germany's BMW motor vehicle group, has decided to close its recently opened car assembly plant at Vauxhall, on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. Page 2

Thomson-CSF of France and GEC-Marconi of the UK are to pool their sonar activities in a joint company which, with a FFr2.7bn (\$335m) turnover and 1,300 employees, will be the second largest supplier of underwater listening devices after Lockheed Martin of the US. Page 5

The Financial Times will not be published on Easter Monday, but will resume normal publication from Tuesday.

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Raincoats make
a splash

Slaughter of
the fattened pig

WEEKEND APRIL 6/APRIL 7/APRIL 8 1996

US jobs rise signals firm growth

By Michael Prowse
in Washington
and Lisa Bransten in New York

Figures spark bond price fall
as prospect of rate cut fades

The jobless rate edged up to 5.6 per cent from 5.5 per cent in February, but remained well below the 5.8 per cent rate in January.

The Labour Department said non-farm payroll employment rose 140,000 last month against economists' projections of a gain of only about 60,000. The increase was significant because it followed a revised 24,000 gain in employment in February - the largest for 12 years.

Some analysts had dismissed the February report as an aberration and predicted very weak figures for March. The solid gain last month, following other evidence of a rebound, indicates the US economy is on course for sustained growth at an annual rate of about 2 per cent.

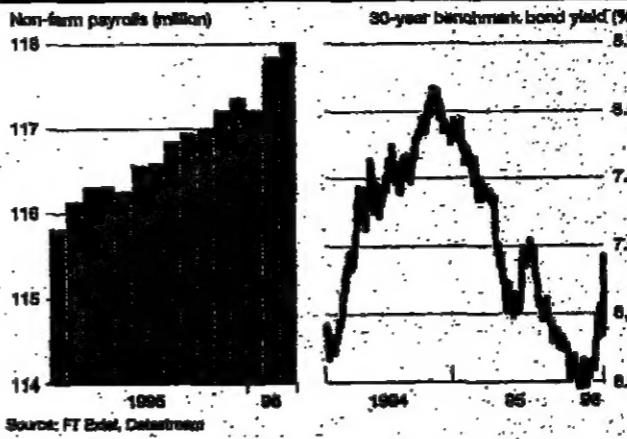
In a shortened trading session, the benchmark 30-year bond lost 15 to end at 80.5, and its yield rose 6.84 per cent from 6.66 per cent at Thursday's close. Shorter-dated securities were even harder hit, reflecting the pessimism about further rate cuts. The stock

market was closed for the Good Friday holiday.

"Our economy has weathered the slow patch of late last year and shaken off any lingering effects of the government shutdowns and the January blizzard," said Mr Joseph Stiglitz, the chief White House economist. He predicted sustainable growth this year in line with the Clinton administration's forecast of a 2.2 per cent gain in gross domestic product.

Mr John Lipsky, chief economist at Salomon Brothers in New York, said the data indicated the economy had shifted from deceleration to acceleration. But it was too early to judge whether this would lead to above-trend growth and upward pressure on inflation.

US employment figures hit bonds



Source: FT Data, Datamonitor

Continued on Page 22

Russia to ease exchange restrictions on rouble

By John Thornhill in Moscow

Russia is to ease currency exchange restrictions significantly, making the rouble fully convertible for foreign trade transactions. The move is a further sign of the government's increasing confidence in its economic stabilisation programme.

The announcement came as President Boris Yeltsin revealed more details yesterday of sweeping proposals to reform Russia's highly complex tax regime and press ahead with economic reforms.

The rouble, a symbol of economic instability following the collapse of the Soviet Union, has been held within a narrow trading band against the dollar since last summer. In real terms, it has appreciated strongly against most leading currencies over the past year.

Mr Svyet Dubinin, the Russian central bank governor, said yesterday in Paris that within the next few months Russia would sign article eight of the International Monetary Fund's charter lifting restrictions on payments and transfers for current account transactions.

The move should assist Russia's exports, which rose 18 per cent to \$78bn last year despite the strong appreciation of the rouble. The convertibility of the rouble will also help importers finance their operations.

But Russian authorities have stepped up measures to halt illegal exports of domestic capital and will retain tight restrictions on foreign capital flows. Foreign participation in the government debt market is still strictly limited.

Campaigning in southern Russia for the June presidential election, Mr Yeltsin unveiled further details of the government's tax reform agenda, which is designed to simplify the tax code and encourage more companies and individuals to report

Continued on Page 22



President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary shovel earth around a blossoming white dogwood tree in a planting ceremony at the White House to honour US commerce secretary Ron Brown and the 34 others who died in an air crash near Dubrovnik, Croatia, on Wednesday. (Photo: Peter Parker)

Fresh setback for Cunard as cruise liner hits coral reef

By Clay Harris in London

and Agencies

and was to have ended at the same port in April 29.

The Cunard liner Royal Viking Sun, crippled when it struck a coral reef on Thursday night, is in the process of being bought by Kvaerner, the Norwegian engineering and shipping group. The takeover is due to be declared unconditional on April 18. Kvaerner has not yet announced its intentions about Cunard.

Along with Mr George Boutros and Mr Bill Brady, who are also moving to Deutsche Bank, Mr Quattrone will run a new, global high-tech banking group with a presence in Asia and Europe, Mr McLelland said.

The Deutsche Bank executive is himself a former Morgan Stanley banker, and worked closely with Mr Quattrone while running its investment banking operations in California in the mid-1990s.

Among companies Mr Quattrone's team have brought to the stock market is Netscape, the most successful in a range of Internet stocks, which Morgan Stanley advised alongside local bank HQ.

Cunard said the damaged area had been isolated and any water inside the ship had been pumped out. The company said it was too early to discuss the level of compensation. "Cunard historically has been fairly generous," it said.

The cruise began in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in January,

and was to have ended at the same port in April 29.

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NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

Ceiling put on cost of lamb and other food products as worries about inflation increase

Athens fears indigestion over Easter prices

By Karin Hope in Athens

Greece's trade ministry has set price ceilings for lamb and other food products to keep down the cost of the traditional meal for tomorrow week's Orthodox Easter - a whole spit-roasted lamb and a large basket of red-dyed eggs.

Fears that domestic health controls may be inadequate have added an extra dimension to Greek worries about the soaring price of the Easter feast on Sunday April 14.

Lamb prices increased by 50 per cent last month after poultry and beef sales collapsed because of worries about salmonella infection and BSE -

mad cow disease. Greek households consume an estimated 1m lambs at Easter, while egg sales rose tenfold, according to retailers' associations.

Mr Michalis Chrysokoidis, trade minister, said policing of several thousand outlets for meat and vegetables in the Athens area would be stepped up during Easter week. Import restrictions on lamb and fresh produce are being temporarily lifted "to keep prices at acceptable levels for the holidays."

The measures are also intended to help curb inflation, which is causing concern among budget planners. Government officials are delaying announcing the March inflation

figures, but independent analysis said inflation was likely to jump to an annual rate of 8.9 per cent from 8.5 per cent in February - more than three times the EU average.

A surge in food prices, which make up almost 30 per cent of Greece's consumer price basket for calculating inflation, is blamed for the accelerating inflation rate.

Mrs Anastasia Mavrikis, shopping at the central meat market in Athens yesterday, said: "I'm looking hard at the stamps on the meat to make sure it's local produce, but after what's being going on in the past few weeks it is difficult to trust what you see."

The Athens poultry market was hit by the collapse last week of a large producer, Voktas, which is suspected of selling thousands of chicks infected with salmonella to other poultry farmers before going out of business. There are fears, too, that some of the 35,000 chickens abandoned at the company's premises outside Athens may have reached the market.

Sales of beef have fallen by more than 50 per cent since Greek market inspectors seized at least 60 tonnes of British beef during raids on cold storage facilities around Athens. Greece imports only small quantities of beef from Britain.

but seizures of undeclared meat have felled Greek concern about BSE.

However, Greece's state veterinary service yesterday called off a week-long strike after only 24 hours when the government gave in to their demand for "danger-money". The walk-out had prompted fears that illegal lamb imports would rise sharply, exposing consumers to further health risks.

Mr Theodoros Ananias, who heads the veterinarians' union, said: "We deserve parity with other state services, like the forest fire service, who get paid for working in hazardous conditions."

The veterinarians are usually on call around the clock in the run-up to Easter to prevent illegally slaughtered lamb reaching the market. In border areas they must check shipments of lamb suspected of being smuggled from other Balkan countries.

Customs officials say an illegal trade in livestock from Albania and Bulgaria, where veterinary controls are weak, expands just before Easter, with thousands of lambs being driven across the border at night.

They are immediately processed at slaughter-houses in northern Greece and sold to wholesalers as Greek produce.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DIGEST

Daimler chiefs in profits probe

The Stuttgart public prosecutor is investigating several managers and members of the supervisory board of Daimler-Benz for possible infringements against the law governing public limited companies.

The prosecutor's office confirmed yesterday it was following up complaints from a shareholders' group against Mr Edzard Reuter, Daimler's former managing board chairman; Mr Jürgen Schrempp, present chairman of Daimler-Benz; and Mr Hilmar Koppen, head of the Daimler supervisory board and chairman of Deutsche Bahn.

In February Mr Jochen Knoesel, a representative of the Würzburg association for the promotion of shareholder democracy, filed a suit against the three managers alleging they had deliberately presented a false picture of Daimler's profit position last year.

Incorrect presentation of a company's position by its top management can be punished by up to three years in jail. The hub of the shareholders' complaint was that early last year Mr Reuter forecast a rising net profit for 1995. A few weeks later Mr Schrempp predicted a loss of DM1.5bn (\$1bn). This week Daimler disclosed that the 1995 loss amounted to DM5.7bn.

The Daimler-Benz group, which in February said it was untroubled by the shareholders' move, did not comment on the latest development.

Peter Norman, Bonn

Bank chief accuses Belgrade over IMF

By Laura Silber in Belgrade

The governor of the Yugoslav National Bank has blamed his own government for blocking rump Yugoslavia's membership of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr Dragoslav Avramovic

said that an argument over whether Yugoslavia - now comprising only Serbia and Montenegro - was named as the sole successor to the former communist federation of six republics of one of five successor states stymied negotiations last week in Paris with the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation and the IMF.

Mr Avramovic said the IMF

would offer membership and support, with no political conditions, if Belgrade signed as a successor state.

President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia claims Yugoslavia never ceased to exist, as US charges, said in court he had been under orders from his superiors in Japan not to disclose the trading losses to the US authorities immediately. Also, he said, ministry of finance officials had warned him that to reveal the losses earlier "would be disastrous for the Japanese economy".

Mr Iguchi revealed the losses to Daimler executives in July last year but they were not disclosed to the US banking regulators until September.

Richard Waters, New York

Daiwa manager pleads guilty

The manager of Daiwa Bank's New York branch pleaded guilty on Thursday to one charge of helping to hide the \$1.1bn of losses run up by one of the bank's traders. In comments made in court in New York, he suggested that officials of Japan's ministry of finance had put pressure on the bank not to disclose the losses to the US authorities earlier.

The plea agreement follows Daiwa's decision last month to plead guilty to charges over the cover-up, and to pay a fine of \$340m. The trader, Mr Toshihide Iguchi, also reached a plea agreement and is due to be sentenced on April 15.

Mr Masahiro Tsuda, the only other bank official named in US charges, said in court he had been under orders from his superiors in Japan not to disclose the trading losses to the US authorities immediately. Also, he said, ministry of finance officials had warned him that to reveal the losses earlier "would be disastrous for the Japanese economy".

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Richard Waters, New York

Belgian ex-minister sentenced

Mr Guy Coeme, former Belgian defence minister, and seven associates were yesterday found guilty of fraud and abuse of public office.

Mr Coeme was given a two-year suspended jail sentence and ordered to repay sums he illegally received from a political research company. He was also stripped of his civil and political rights for five years, throwing into question his position as an MP and mayor of the town of Waregem. The other defendants were given suspended sentences. Mr Coeme said he would appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr Coeme, defence minister in 1988, is also implicated in an inquiry into kickbacks said to have been paid by Agusta of Italy to Belgium's French- and Dutch-speaking socialist parties to secure an order for 46 helicopters. The inquiry forced Mr Coeme to quit the government in 1994.

Reuter, Brussels

Arms control talks break down

Talks in Vienna aimed at establishing a new regime to limit the supply of arms and military technology to "pains" regimes have broken down after disagreements between the US and Russia.

The breakdown of the talks, grouping 31 western and former communist nations, was a blow to US hopes of curbing the military ambitions of such countries as Libya, Iran, Iraq, Cuba and North Korea. Negotiations will resume in July.

Russia, an established supplier of arms to all those countries, agreed last December to join a new military technology regime whose members would swap information about exports of weapons and "dual-use" equipment. The new regime is intended to be a successor to Cocom, the cold-war arrangement by which western countries sought to avoid exporting anything that could enhance the technology of their adversaries.

However, both Russia and France are wary of the latest US efforts to regulate the international arms market, arguing that Washington may simply be trying to consolidate its commercial position.

Bruce Clark, *Diplomatic Correspondent*

Bonino caught in Somali fighting

A top European official was caught up in two shooting incidents in south-east Somalia yesterday as clan fighting raged in the city of Kismayo. At least 75 people were reportedly killed. A convoy in which Ms Emma Bonino, European commissioners for humanitarian affairs, was travelling was twice forced to stop when militia escorts opened fire against a smaller rival group. The Italian politician and her party, in Somalia to review relief efforts funded by the EU, left Kismayo aboard a Belgian air force transport aircraft.

At least 40 militiamen and 35 civilians were killed in the intra-clan warfare which erupted suddenly in the city on Thursday and continued yesterday.

Reuter, Kismayo

Liquidators at Latvian bank

Latvia's central bank has called in the liquidators at Bank Baltija after reconstruction plans for the biggest bank in the Baltic region broke down. It is believed the bank owes 150,000 creditors more than \$400m. Its collapse briefly threatened to undermine the financial system. About 20 per cent of Latvia's citizens had an account at Baltija, as well as 20,000 companies.

Deloitte & Touche, the international accounting firm which helped trace the assets of the failed BCCI bank, is to investigate the causes of Baltija's failure and salvage what assets it can. Latvia has recently adopted new bankruptcy laws to enable failed financial institutions to be more effectively liquidated.

John Thornhill, Moscow

Tokyo set to lift telecoms curbs

The Japanese government has announced it is ready to lift restrictions on foreign participation in the country's telecommunications sector.

The decision comes ahead of a month-end deadline for completion of negotiations by the World Trade Organisation's group on telecommunications. Mr Ichiro Hino, Japan's minister of posts and telecommunications, said: "I believe Japan should play a major role to ensure that these negotiations are brought to a successful conclusion."

He said it was time Japan increased transparency in the sector, adding that Tokyo would lift restrictions currently limiting foreign ownership and foreign board members to no more than a third of the total in telecommunications.

Emiko Terazono, Tokyo

German slowdown continues

The German economy slowed further in February, according to preliminary figures released by the economics ministry which showed a 1.6 per cent drop in industrial production from a month earlier. More reliable statistics, which compared January and February with the two previous months, showed a 1 per cent fall in industrial production, the ministry said. The construction sector was hardest hit, with production falling 8.5 per cent, in part because of the bitter winter.

Hopes for a recovery were dashed by a report from the Ifo economics institute which showed companies were planning further production cuts. The institute forecast that industrial production would fall by about 2 per cent this year compared with 1995.

Michael Lindemann, Bonn

Russian war of words inflames poll passions

By John Thornhill in Moscow

Russia's presidential election yesterday burst into life with a slanging match between the leading candidates after President Boris Yeltsin suggested some of his Communist opponents should be in jail.

Communist leaders reacted angrily to a statement by Mr Yeltsin, campaigning in the southern town of Belgorod, on Thursday that it was "an outrage" that three prominent leftwing deputies, who supported the hardline Communist coup in 1991, should be in

parliament. "They should all be sitting in another prison," said Mr Yeltsin.

Mr Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist party presidential candidate, who is leading the opinion polls, yesterday denounced Mr Yeltsin's "unprecedented slur".

Mr Zyuganov said the president's attitude showed his contempt for the Russian constitution, which was his own "brainchild". He pointed out that one of the three - Mr Nikolai Ryzhkov, the former Soviet prime minister - had been elected in the Belgorod region with 85 per cent of the

vote.

Mr Ryzhkov, who heads the leftist Popular Rule movement, is playing a leading part in Mr Zyuganov's election campaign ahead of the June 6 poll. He demanded an apology from Mr Yeltsin for his comments which "bordered on threats".

"Apparently, I am going to be put in prison for once being the head of a great government - the USSR," Mr Ryzhkov said.

Mr Yeltsin, who came to power in 1991 after facing down the hardline coup, has been contrasting his own "moderation" with the



Ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky displays his candidate's certificate yesterday, showing he is officially registered as a candidate in June's presidential election

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By Laura Silber in Belgrade

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John Thornhill, Moscow

chiefs
S Probe

Airbus set to win big China deal

By David Buchan in Paris

China is expected to place a substantial order for Airbus airliners when its prime minister, Mr Li Peng, visits the European aircraft consortium's headquarters in Toulouse next Friday.

He will be making a visit to France that will also take him to the Elysée for a lunch meeting with President Jacques Chirac.

The Airbus concern in Toulouse would not yesterday confirm reports of an impending Chinese order for A320 aircraft. But it said an order was "plausible" given that the 150-seat A320 suited China's current needs and that Beijing was expected shortly to renew aircraft purchases.

For the past year, Beijing has stopped Chinese airlines from buying more aircraft to let the country's air transport infrastructure expand to cope with aircraft already bought. Several Chinese airlines operate Airbus, for which some Chinese manufacturers make some parts.

But Airbus has only 7 per cent of the Chinese aircraft market, compared with its 30 per cent share of the world market.

An indication that China may switch some aircraft pur-

chases from the US to Europe came last month when Mrs Wu Yi, trade minister, postponed a trip to the US, shortly after the Clinton administration threatened action against China for infringing intellectual property rights.

Mr Li has postponed visits this month to the Netherlands and Luxembourg but is pressing on with his trip to France from April 10 to 12.

Mr Chirac has invited the Chinese prime minister for talks and lunch next Thursday, the Elysée announced yesterday.

Amnesty International, the human rights group, yesterday appealed to the 100 top French companies to take account of China's human rights abuses when doing business with the country.

Foreign companies might regard China as "an economic Eldorado," but should not remain blind to its denial of political and religious liberty, torture and arbitrary use of the death penalty.

France is hoping other contracts, including ones in gas and steel, will be signed during Mr Li's visit.

Mr Chen Jinhua, head of China's state planning commission, held preparatory discussions with French ministers in Paris this week.

Devotees of a faded dynasty desert Congress

Mark Nicholson examines the election prospects for India's ruling party, no longer able to call on the Nehru family name or its traditional coalition of rich and poor supporters

A lone on the sleepy verandah of the Congress party building in Rae Bareli, headquarters for Mrs Indira Gandhi's three sweeping election victories between 1967 and 1980, a low-caste woman lies asleep by her broom. Little stirs inside the chipped ochre walls besides a calendar icon of a Hindu goddess of power, flapped by a ceiling fan in the bare office of Mr G P Shukla, Congress worker in 1957, devotee of Indira's husband, won the seat in the 1950s. Mrs Gandhi, as prime minister, later dominated the seat from 1967, rewarding the town's poor voters with a lavish railway station, factories and some of the best roads in Uttar Pradesh.

Today India's roads are crumbling - along with the Congress hold on Rae Bareli. The seat is now one of just five Congress holds in Uttar Pradesh, India's biggest state, UP sends 55 MPs to New Delhi. But in this state, as in other populous northern states comprising India's "Hindi belt," the party which has governed India for all but four years since independence has not survived the emerging forces of Indian politics. Its electoral hopes rest on holding seats in southern, north-eastern and perhaps western states.

In the north, the assertive Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (51 seats in UP in 1991) rose in the late 1980s to tap the religious frustrations

which peaked with the 1992 mass demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque at Ayodhya, 100kms north of Rae Bareli. Moslems, perhaps 14 per cent of UP's population, felt the Congress government looked on complicitously as Hindu zealots smashed the mosque, and have since abandoned the party.

Meanwhile, the rise in north India of populist caste-based parties appealing to the complex strata of low and "backward" castes which dominate agrarian north India, has fur-



Prime Minister Rao garrisons at an election rally yesterday. He is expected to lose his majority

ther weakened Congress.

The old Congress voting coalition of upper-caste Hindus, Moslems and Dalits - once known as untouchables - has collapsed. "Congress has deceived us," says Mr Ahmed Nehaluddin, president of the Indian Muslim Forum. "They treated us like servants and gave us no influence." In a dusty, mud-walled Dalit village 25kms from Rae Bareli, lower-caste villagers are also disillusioned. "Congress chances are slim," says Mr Ram Dayal, a village leader. "Their earlier

leaders are dead, the new leaders are all gangsters."

And in Rae Bareli the party is demoralised. On the floor of a second Congress office, a dozen party workers sit grumbly that Mr Vikram Kaul, who is linked to the Gandhi family and is the Congress candidate for the seat, is unknown in the area and has visited it only three times in the last six months. The BJP candidate, Mr Ashok Singh, they say, is popular and well-known. "It will not be easy, we could lose," says Mr Radhey Ram, one

of the workers. Mr Kaul, meanwhile, has eschewed both Congress offices and is running his campaign from the comfort of Rae Bareli's hotel. He returned to India only last year after more than a decade dealing in "commodities" in the Gulf and the UK. Perched on a bed in spotless white traditional *kurti* clothing and new Reeboks, he says he is not a politician but was asked to stand for the seat out of "family duty".

But Mr Kaul's links with the Nehru-Gandhi family are attenuated. Mr Shukla fears they will not be enough. Mr P V Narasimha Rao, the Congress prime minister, opened his election campaign last month in neighbouring Amethi, seat of the late Rajiv Gandhi, portraying himself as the inheritor of the Nehru-Gandhi tradition. He drew 15,000 people. Mr Shukla, who chuckles at mention of Mr Rao, recalls Indira drawing 150,000. Mr Shukla's fond dream is that Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's Italian-born widow, or perhaps one of her two children, should stand in Rae Bareli or Amethi, to revive family and Congress fortunes. But she remains aloof. And Mr Rao, for all his campaigning invocations in this place," says Mr Shukla, who confesses he would today rather vote for Mr Atal Bihari Vajpeyi, the more charismatic leader of the BJP standing in Lucknow, UP's state capital. Unlike Indira, the "mother of India," he says. "Mr Rao has a very negative image - like a stepfather."

Political extremes dance on dark side of the moon

Revolutionary left and right in US sometimes share anarchic hatreds

It is tempting simply to say of Ted Kaczynski - who is suspected by the FBI of being the notorious Unabomber - that one of the last of the 1960s leftwing radicals has finally been brought to ground after 18 years on the run.

But it may also be observed that on the dark side of the revolutionary moon strange forces meet, sharing little by way of comprehensive ideology but equally imbued with an anarchic hatred of authority and what they see as the de-humanising effect of modern technology.

Just 200 miles away in the same state of Montana where Mr Kaczynski was apprehended in his hand-made shack, about 20 self-styled "Freemen" are holed up in a farm - under discreet siege by law officers determined to avoid at all costs the bloody denouement of Waco.

But their beliefs, which may be conventionally classified on the far right of the political spectrum, do not, when stripped of their virulent anti-semitism and racism, seem so far removed from those expressed by the Unabomber in the 37,000-word manifesto published under duress by several newspapers last year.

Nor are they much different from those attributed to Timothy McVeigh, about to stand trial for last year's bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City which cost 168 lives, and some of the rightwing militia, among whom he moved; nor of the two white soldiers who shocked that modern paragon of non-discrimination, the US Army, by going on an off-duty shooting spree against blacks in Fayetteville, North Carolina, last December.

The case can be made, therefore, that domestic terrorism has merely moved from being the preserve of the old far left to the new distant right. They are linked also, if oddly, by technological competence: the Unabomber's explosive devices were perverse works of art, while the Freemen's computer-designed money orders and legal documents were good enough to fool banks and businesses to the tune of \$1m-\$2m (£650,000-£1.3m).

The orthodox wisdom about the old radicals is that they simply "dropped out" - often to the more remote parts of the country, such as Montana, that few appears the natural habitat of the paranoid right.

But this is an incomplete picture, as the subsequent history of some of the more famous names from that era shows. Tom Hayden, one of the Chicago Seven whose conviction on charges of incitement to riot at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago was overturned on appeal and who

By Shireen Sidhu in New Delhi

India's Supreme Court has ruled that election spending by candidates and parties in this month's general election will be strictly scrutinised.

The ruling is a harsh indictment of Indian political parties, which since the 1970s have spent progressively larger amounts of unaccounted money on elections. A lack of transparency in election funding has strengthened the nexus

between politicians and big businesses, spawning corruption scandals, such as the "hawala" money laundering scandal which led to the resignation of several ministers from the government of prime minister PV Narasimha Rao.

The judgment is in response to a petition filed by Mr H D Shourie, a retired bureaucrat who heads Social Cause, a non-profit social interest organisation. Mr Shourie said some political parties had

not filed income tax returns in more than a decade, and were flouting the rules of parliament and the income tax laws with impunity.

In their ruling, Mr Justice Kuldip Singh and Mr Justice Faizanuddin said: "The political parties in their quest for power, spend more than Rs10bn on the general election, yet nobody accounts for the bulk of the money so spent and there is no accountability anywhere. Nobody discloses the

source of money. There are no proper accounts and no audit."

"In a democracy where rule of law prevails, this type of naked display of black money, by violating the mandatory provisions of law, cannot be permitted," the judges said.

The court said the revenue secretary from the ministry of finance was empowered to order inquiries against defaulters and take necessary action.

Parties and candidates would have to account for all money

spent on their campaigns, whether or not they had authorised the expenditure.

India's election laws permit political parties to spend up to Rs50,000 (\$13,200) per election, and individual candidates up to Rs150,000. Politicians say these figures are unrealistic.

"It is impossible for top leaders to campaign across the length and the breadth of the country, except by helicopter, but the ceiling is so ridiculously low that it allows only

for travel by bullock cart," says a senior Bharatiya Janata party MP.

But political parties which have adhered to the law have welcomed the judgment. "It will help curb lavish expenditure by some parties, and it will also help the Election Commission curb the illegal use of money during elections," said Mr Prakash Karat, a politburo member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Mexican church leaders speak out against the 'God of profit'

By Leslie Crawford
in Mexico City

Early every morning, in a shabby quarter of Mexico City, silent queues of supplicants form outside the offices of Caritas, the Catholic Church's charity organisation. Peasants stand in frayed trousers, clutching bundles of possessions and scraps of paper with Caritas' providential address. Women have come to beg for food. Young men, thrown out of work by the economic crisis, hope the charity will find them a job.

The queue has got longer as the recession deepens. Caritas feeds 35,000 people every week in the capital alone. The charity has rented warehouses from which it distributes donated food to orphanages, hospitals and soup kitchens. It runs vocational training courses for unemployed youth, and health clinics for those too poor to afford the government's subsidised services.

Father Manuel Zubillaga, Caritas director, says the charity's resources have been overwhelmed by Mexico's financial crash. Every person he turns away empty-handed increases his anger against a "morally unjust" economic system.

He quotes government statistics which estimate 40m Mexicans have been plunged into abject poverty as a result of

the worst economic slump since the 1930s, almost twice the number of poor that existed before the devaluation of the peso 15 months ago.

"The government is pursuing absurd economic policies," Fr Zubillaga says. "It ignores Mexico's social needs, it has created massive unemployment. The church does not wish to attack individuals [in government], but it is critical of the values upon which this economic model is built."

The church has added a powerful voice to those who believe Mexico's liberal economic experiment failed

Mexico's unprecedented social hardship has brought the Catholic Church into an uneasy confrontation with the government.

Over the past year, church leaders have become increasingly vocal in their criticism of President Ernesto Zedillo's orthodoxy economic policies.

They have spoken out against tax increases and against the cutbacks in social spending needed to repay \$4bn of foreign debt last year.

At a recent, well publicised

meeting, Bishop Abelardo Alvarado told assembled clergy that the Church could not accept "a system which subordinates and sacrifices fundamental human rights to economics."

Archbishop Sergio Obeso Rivera also lashed out against "profit, which has become a new, all-powerful god".

Such outspoken views are new to a Church which was officially recognised by the Mexican state only four years ago, when relations with the Vatican were restored after a 120-year break.

While nearly 90 per cent of Mexicans are Catholic, Mexico's anti-clerical 1917 constitution banned churches from owning property or running schools (a ruling tacitly ignored by the authorities), forbade priests to wear cassocks in public, and denied them the vote. Constitutional reforms in 1990 gave legal recognition to religious institutions for the first time in 70 years.

Official recognition led to a honeymoon between the conservative Church hierarchy and the government of then president Carlos Salinas,

says Mr Emilio Alvarez, who heads Cenicos, a Catholic think-tank in Mexico City. "They were seduced by the invitations to the presidential palace, and their acceptance as members of the establishment."

By the end of Mr Salinas's

presidency in 1994, however, Mr Alvarez says the church's disillusionment with the government had set in.

Fraudulent elections, rising crime, a peasant guerrilla uprising in the southern state of Chiapas, and last year's stampede of the church into a more militant stance, adding a powerful moral voice to those who believe Mexico's neo-liberal economic experiment has failed.

The Mexican government is suspicious of the Catholic Church's new protagonism, and the ruling Institutional Revolutionary party (PRI) has attacked its perceived meddling in politics.

However, the government has nevertheless sought the co-operation of the church to maintain social peace.

Last November, when President Zedillo appeared to be tottering under rumours of military coups and renewed volatility in the financial markets, it was a meeting between the president and Mexican bishops, and their subsequent call for social unity, which steadied the government.

Since then, the Church hierarchy has been careful to moderate its statements, wary of fanning social unrest. It

has established a car plant in China in the early 1980s, well before VW opened the first European plant in 1985. If it had accepted a Chinese government invitation at the time, but the Japanese group turned down the offer on the grounds that the risks were then too great.

Beijing's memory of that snub has faded but apparently not died. "The French and Germans were prepared to take the risk and Toyota has suffered for that," said Mr Peter Boardman, car industry analysts at UBS Securities in Tokyo.

Toyota's Chinese strategy has until now been limited to gaining access through affiliates, principally 33.4 per cent owned Daihatsu and Nippon Denso, its 22.9 per cent owned components manufacturer.

Tianjin produced 65,000 Chariots last year, up from 58,000 in 1994 and receives technical assistance from Daihatsu. Nippon Denso started a joint venture with Tianjin in February to make starters and alternators for the Charade. The prospective engine-making joint venture will supply 130,000 units for the vehicle.

● Mitsubishi yesterday announced plans to produce a new multi-purpose vehicle at its Netherlands-based joint venture with Volvo, the Swedish car group, and boost capacity there by 50 per cent.

N Korea quits armistice

By John Burton in Seoul

would force the US to consider such a treaty.

Analysts compared the North Korean statement with its 1993 threat to withdraw from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and with its recent offer to hold negotiations with the US on the armistice agreement and with South Korea on emergency food aid to be given to the US.

The threat to withdraw from the international nuclear safeguards treaty led to negotiations with US and an agreement by North Korea to abandon its suspected nuclear weapons programme in return for the supply of safer nuclear reactors.

The latest North Korean action appears timed to coincide with a visit by US President Bill Clinton to South Korea on April 16 for talks on North Korea to honour the truce.

South Korean armed forces

yesterday stepped up surveillance of North Korean military movements after Pyongyang said it had renounced its obligations under the armistice agreement that ended the 1950-53 Korean war.

North Korea has been trying for two years to dismantle the armistice and replace it with a formal peace treaty with Washington.

Pyongyang hopes this will lead to the withdrawal of 37,000 US troops from South Korea.

Officials in Seoul have warned that North Korea might try to provoke a military incident along the demilitarised zone in the belief that this

PETROFINA

During its meeting of 26 March, the Board of Directors of Petrofina closed the accounts of the company for 1995. The consolidated profit amounts to 12.3 billion BEF, in which Petrofina's share amounts to 11.6 billion BEF and the minority interests' share to 0.7 billion BEF.

The consolidated cash flow amounts to 39.3 billion BEF, and the other operating revenues amount to 563.2 billion BEF.

The share of Petrofina in the recurrent net income reaches 13.0 billion BEF (562 BEF/share) versus 8.3 billion BEF (354 BEF/share) in 1994, an increase of close to 60%. The Board will propose to the Annual General Meeting of Shareholders on May 10, 1996 the payment of a gross dividend of 352 BEF per share or an increase of 10% on that paid in 19

NEWS: UK

"There will undoubtedly be Names who remain so angry that they do not care whether Lloyd's survives"

Deal with US regulators delays pursuit of Names

By Ralph Atkins,
Insurance Correspondent

Lloyd's of London is to stop pursuing the debts of US Names for one month as part of a "ceasefire" agreement with a group of state securities regulators. Lloyd's hopes the agreement will give time to persuade regulators across the US to halt court actions, prompted by lossmaking Names, which threaten to disrupt its recovery plans.

It hopes instead to persuade Names to accept the recovery plan, which includes a £2.8bn offer to lossmaking and litigating Names. However, the Lloyd's agreement with the

North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA), will not stop legal action brought by California's department of corporations, which was not part of the deal.

The California action is causing particular headaches for Lloyd's because it could lead to the freezing of Lloyd's trust funds held in the US to guarantee underwriting there. Like action by securities regulators in eight other states, it is based on allegations that investment in Lloyd's was mis-sold.

Mr Peter Lane, Lloyd's north American managing director, said Lloyd's had "a chance to educate the state securities administrators about the mar-

ket". The amount owed by US Names is likely to run into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Lloyd's hopes to reach agreements with the securities regulators modelled on proposals accepted in Louisiana. Regulators there agreed not to pursue

LLOYD'S

LLOYD'S OF LONDON

legal action until August, when Lloyd's hopes to have persuaded Names to accept its recovery plan.

Mr Philip Feigin, chairman of the NASA co-ordinating committee, said: "We believe it will be of benefit to things

down for a while and give both sides a chance to talk with each other."

• Lloyd's should increase its proposed £2.8bn (£4.3bn) out-of-court offer to lossmaking and litigating Names which forms part of the insurance market's recovery plan, says an independent report today. But the London law firm Slaughter and May says alternatives to the recovery plan are unlikely to leave anyone better off. It adds that a plan by Lloyd's to "re-insure" billions of claims outstanding on old insurance policies into a rescue vehicle, Equitas, this summer offers the best way of drawing a line under most Names' affairs.

The firm adds, however: "There may well be... Names who calculate that, while they may not be better off if Lloyd's fails, they may not be worse off either. And there will undoubtedly be some Names that they do not care whether Lloyd's survives or not. This is why more than £2.8bn may be required."

The report's support for the principles of the recovery plan allow it to make an important boost to Lloyd's which welcomed its conclusions. "Strenuous" efforts are being made to increase the £2.8bn, Lloyd's

and the £2.8bn is needed to persuade Names to drop litigation and help pay for the setting up of Equitas. Slaughter and May says it is "unable to think of a better form of 'finality', for the generality of Names, than that offered by the proposed reinsurance into Equitas".

UK NEWS DIGEST

Regulator expels bond salesman

The Securities and Futures Authority has exercised its most powerful sanction against a former employee in London of CS First Boston, the investment banking arm of Credit Suisse of Switzerland. Mr David Santangelo, a CSFB bond salesman, was expelled from the securities regulator's registers, it was announced on Thursday. The regulator has, in effect, banned Mr Santangelo from life in working in the City.

The SFAs fine Mr Santangelo £25,000 (\$38,000) and ordered him to pay costs of £5,000. The penalty is not as large as the £20,000 imposed on Mr Anthony O'Sullivan, former managing director of Sassocon Europe, the stockbroking firm. But expulsion is a rare punishment, imposed only 30 times since the SFA's formation in 1981. The SFA's latest action is one of the most serious against an employee of the leading investment banks.

Without SFA registration it is very difficult for anyone to obtain work in the City securities markets. No one expelled by the SFA has yet managed to make a City comeback. The SFA said Mr Santangelo had concealed a loss on a position from a client and his employer. He arranged the sale of overpriced securities to the client to disguise the loss, the SFA said.

Mr Santangelo hid the deficit, estimated at \$3m, for several months of 1994 before being discovered by his managers and dismissed from CSFB. He is understood to have left the UK for the US. The SFA is sending the board notice regarding Mr Santangelo to the US Securities and Exchange Commission. CSFB, the SFA said, has compensated the client for its considerable losses.

Nicholas Denton and George Graham

Police on IRA alert

Armed with sweeping new powers, police were on alert across the country yesterday following fears of another British Republican Army bombing this Easter weekend. Thousands of officers were on holiday duty, manning roadblocks and monitoring airports and public buildings following intelligence warnings of a possible bomb attack timed to mark the 80th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin.

For the first time, police had the right to stop and search pedestrians and cordon off parking areas - all powers contained in the emergency legislation rushed through parliament earlier this week. Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland secretary, yesterday condemned the IRA's continued commitment to the use of violence and said it alienated them from the public. He said it was a "very sad thing" that the IRA should choose Easter time to reaffirm its willingness to use terrorism. "I think that shows that they are wholly out of touch with the wishes of the people of Ireland," he said.

Mark Suckerman, London

Life houses face curb

City of London regulators are preparing to crack down on life assurance companies and independent advisers which are not making enough progress with reviewing their sales of personal pensions. The Personal Investment Authority, the watchdog to protect the private investor, is planning to fire a warning shot across the bows of companies which are not getting on with the review. Their task is to identify and compensate victims of bad advice to leave or not to join an occupational pension scheme.

Across the retail financial services sector, this involves re-opening hundreds of thousands of cases. Estimates of the total bill for compensation range up to £2bn (£6.1bn). The warning is likely to come as a statement after the PIA board meeting later this month. It is expected to spell out the range of penalties that the regulator can impose on those who break its rules. This includes reprimands, fines and requiring the culprit to take out press advertisements detailing the disciplinary charges against it. After it has looked at the most recent set of information reflecting progress up to the end of March, the PIA intends to inspect companies which seem not to be trying to meet the deadlines set by regulators. "The aim will be to make the punishment appropriate to the crime, but there will be an end to the 18 months in which we have been 'Mr Nice Guy,'" one regulator said.

Alison Smith, Investment Correspondent

Carmaker rescued again

Reliant Motors, one of the last independent British car manufacturers, yesterday showed stronger survival instincts than many more illustrious names and emerged from insolvency for the third time. A licence to continue producing the company's glassfibre vehicles in Britain has been awarded to Mr Jonathan Heynes, who has a long background in the motor industry including 25 years with Jaguar.

Under the rescue deal Reliant's three-wheeled Robin will continue to be built. Revival of the Reliant Scimitar sports car range is possible, although Mr Heynes said that his priority would be to concentrate on strengthening the core Robin business. Mr Heynes is understood to have paid between £200,000 (\$456,000) and £500,000 for the right to continue producing Reliants in Britain. He won in competition with an alternative bid led by Mr Peter Hall, Reliant's chief executive when the company went into administration.

Alan Pike, Business Services Correspondent

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Thomson and GEC to form joint sonar company

By David Buchan in Paris and
Bernard Gray in London

Thomson-CSF of France and GEC-Marconi of the UK are to pool their sonar activities in a joint company which, with a FFr2.7bn (\$383m) turnover and 3,500 employees, will be the second largest supplier of underwater listening devices after Lockheed Martin of the US.

The company, to be named Thomson Marconi Sonar (TMS), will be owned 50.1 per cent by Thomson and 49.9 per cent by GEC, with the present head of Thomson Sintra, Mr Denis Ranque, taking charge of the new entity.

However, safeguards have been incorporated to prevent Thomson using its controlling stake to override the interests of the Marconi half of the business.

TMS will manufacture sonar equipment for the British and French nuclear submarine fleets, their anti-submarine frigates, and their anti-submarine maritime patrol aircraft.

It pools the sonar interests of Thomson, GEC and the now-

defunct Ferranti to give the venture a dominant position in Europe.

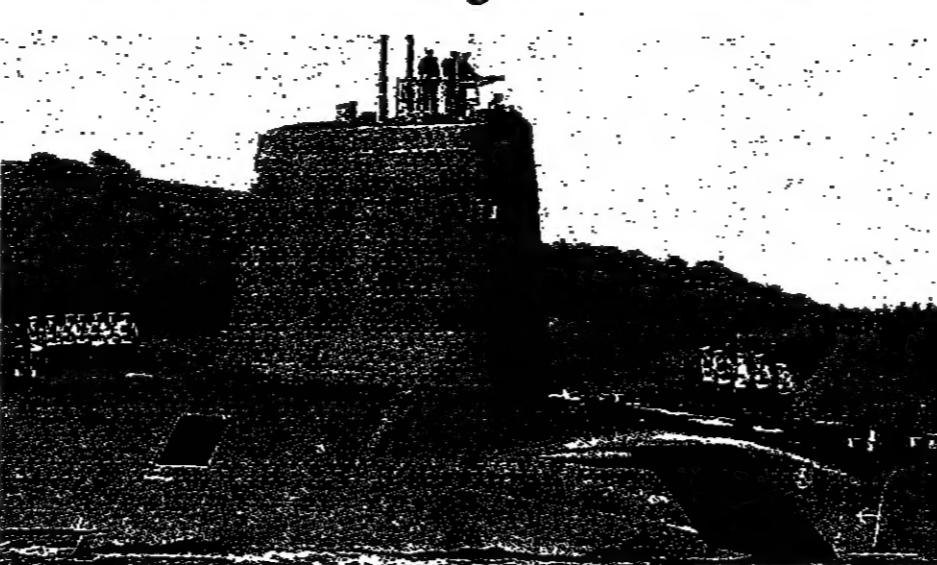
Because submarines carry the bulk of the two countries' nuclear deterrents, sonar is considered a vital defence technology by both countries. But the costs of staying at the forefront of developments in sonar's expensive computer technology mean that the two countries have had to pool their expertise.

Mr Ranque said TMS would aim to combine the expertise of the companies, while maintaining the secrecy involved in providing sonar for such sensitive systems as French and British nuclear submarines.

"The acoustic signatures of these submarines is a very sensitive matter to the French and British governments, but we have satisfied them we can maintain the necessary secrecy," he added.

The new group will be operational in two to three months, with its operational headquarters at Sophia-Antipolis in southern France.

Mr Ranque said Thomson's slight predominance in the



HMS Victorious of the UK Trident fleet, whose sonar equipment will be made by TMS (photograph: Peppermint Pictures)

joint company did not reflect any intervention by the French government, which still owns the Thomson group that it hopes to privatise this year. This would be offset by an undisclosed compensating payment by GEC to Thomson. Yet while Thomson's turnover is higher, it is heavily dependent

on exports. The UK company has a much larger home market.

Exports account for 70 per cent to 75 per cent of Thomson Sintra's FFr1.5bn turnover, in contrast with GEC-Marconi, which exports about 30 per cent of its products, and the

Ferranti business, now owned by GEC and Thomson, which exported almost nothing.

Mr Ranque said Thomson Sintra had had to increase exports, because French defence orders had reached "crisis" levels. A long series of French sonar programmes, which had bolstered Thomson over the past decade, were coming to an end, and he saw little early prospect of substantial new French orders. French business would now account for 24 per cent of TMS' combined current turnover, but Mr Ranque forecast this could sink to 10-15 per cent.

By contrast, the UK government was "sustaining" its national sonar market with a series of regular orders. As a result, Mr Ranque predicted that TMS would soon do as much as 40 per cent of its business in the UK, against 34 per cent at the moment. Thomson is already present in the UK market, and Mr Mike Shaw, head of GEC-Marconi sonar, said his company had already been working smoothly with its new partner on the 2087-tonne array frigate sonar.

Sumitomo takes Y11.6bn loss on UK property arm

By William Dawkins in Tokyo

Sumitomo Corporation, the Japanese trading company, has liquidated its wholly owned UK property subsidiary, Sumitomo Properties, written off its Y11.6bn (\$108.5m) loss and taken direct control of its main asset, half ownership of a City of London office building.

The loss, while large even by Sumitomo's standards, would have no impact on annual profits, the company said. More than half of it, Y5.5bn, would be covered by the profit on the sale of a property in Osaka, Japan, to Sumitomo Life insurance, which holds a 5.5 per cent stake in the trading company. Co-operation of this kind is not unusual among members of the same Japanese *keiretsu* corporate family.

Sumitomo Corporation said there was therefore no important change to its existing projection of a Y38bn recurring profit - before tax and recurring items - in the year just ended, a 7 per cent increase on last year's figure of Y35.4bn.

After the liquidation, Sumitomo will take over its UK property unit's £286m (\$54.9m) of loans to Vinters Place. Half of that total is financed in yen and that proportion would increase if and when more financing was required, said Mr Shimazaki. Sumitomo had no clear indications of the future funding needed by Vinters' Place, but was prepared to increase its loans to cover any future losses.

Fokker plays down chances of a takeover in short term

By Ronald van de Krol
In Amsterdam

Fokker, the bankrupt Dutch aircraft maker, said yesterday that Saab of Sweden and Samsung of South Korea had discussed making a joint approach for the company, but that they failed to reach agreement and ultimately decided not to bid.

The Dutch company also said exploratory talks held this week in Amsterdam with the Russian aviation companies Tupolev and Yakovlev had failed to yield any firm conclusions. Fokker's receivers have asked the Russians to come back with more detailed business plans and financial strategies.

"In the short term, a take-

over of the aircraft-making operations by another party does not look feasible," Fokker said.

Nevertheless, Fokker's three court-appointed receivers plan to look into the possibility of completing the construction of 12 to 18 more aircraft than previously planned.

When Fokker declared bankruptcy on March 15, it said it would finish making 15 more aircraft already ordered by customers, allowing the factory to stay open with a skeleton production staff until at least June. The additional 12 to 18 aircraft would keep the factory in operation for another eight to 12 months, giving Fokker more time to seek a longer-term solution.

The company said some of

its customers either wanted to take delivery of previously ordered aircraft or were keen to place new orders to round out their Fokker fleet. "There have even been approaches by new customers," Fokker said.

The decision to extend production will require permission from the Dutch court which granted last month's bankruptcy application. The move will also depend on customers being prepared to make prepayments and suppliers agreeing to make deliveries at the lower prices which were negotiated before Fokker went into bankruptcy.

Austrian Airlines this week took delivery of a Fokker 70, the first aeroplane to roll off the Dutch company's assembly lines since it went bankrupt.

The warning in February of losses for the current year and the prospect of a dividend cut knocked 20 per cent from the share price.

Mr Doherty denied that his move was connected with the company's poor performance and said it had been planned since he became chairman.

Norcros also announced on Thursday that it was selling its code labelling business to Sato Corporation of Japan for £25.5m. The sale is the first from within the four-part printing and packaging business. It comes a week after the group sold its half share in a steel strip business to British Steel for £6.2m.

The proceeds from both disposals will be used to reduce debt from £50m to £26m, with gearing halving to 20 per cent.

However, the sale of AutoPrint and Norprint, two of the three remaining print and packaging businesses, is likely to be delayed because of restructuring. A £5.5m charge will be taken in 1996-97.

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COMPANIES AND FINANCE: UK

BET claims 'dirty tactics' by Rentokil

By Tim Burt

BET, the business services group fighting a £1.9bn takeover bid by Rentokil, has complained to the Takeover Panel over what it claims are dirty tactics by its rival.

The company told the panel that it suspected Rentokil or its advisers of being the source of market rumours suggesting it was coming under pressure from institutional investors to

agree a recommended offer.

Last week, both Legal & General and M&G Investment Management were said to have urged BET to consider an agreed takeover.

Meanwhile, Sir Christopher

Harding, chairman of BET, denied it had discussed such a possibility. M&G declined to comment, although privately officials said it had not yet spoken to BET.

The panel, which has already intervened twice during the bid to remind Rentokil and its

advisers of their obligations under the takeover code, was said to be studying BET's claims and to have raised them with Rentokil.

Meanwhile, Sir Christopher Harding, chairman of BET, accused Rentokil of hiding "cheap soundbites" by criticising its defence. Rentokil last week queried BET's cash management and said it was heavily indebted.

Sir Christopher, however,

said: "Those absurd comments only serve to emphasise Rentokil's fundamental lack of understanding of BET's strength and value."

Rejecting suggestions that its net debt exceeded £100m, Sir Christopher said borrowings had fallen from £114m at mid-year to £60m on March 31.

Mr Clive Thompson, Rentokil's chief executive, hit back by saying: "Despite BET's claims to be cash generative, it

is not. It cannot even finance the existing dividend of £36m without recourse to borrowings, let alone further investment and acquisitions."

On Thursday, shares in BET rose 1/4p to 207p - a high for the year - while Rentokil gained 6/4p to 368p. At that level, its offer of nine new shares and 80p cash for every 20 BET shares values its target at 204 1/4p a share. There is a cash alternative of 175p.

Rentokil has until next Friday to increase its offer, declare the existing bid final or allow it to lapse. In its annual report, published yesterday, the company said it would appoint two new non-executive directors if it completed the acquisition.

The report also showed that Mr Thompson's salary and benefits rose from £742,000 to £857,000, including a £30,000 performance-related bonus.

BT awaits Chinese reaction on C&W

By Alan Cane in London and John Riddings in Hong Kong

China's view of the proposed merger of British Telecommunications and Cable and Wireless, the two largest UK telecoms groups, could become clear following a meeting in Beijing next week of top BT officials with the Chinese Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

China's interest in the merger, which would create one of the world's largest telecoms groups with a market capitalisation of £23bn, arises from Cable and Wireless's majority ownership of Hong Kong Telecom, one of the most strategically important operators in Asia.

Given Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty next year and Hong Kong Telecom's business interests on the mainland, BT will be anxious to get Beijing's blessing, said one Hong Kong telecoms analyst.

There are no restrictions on foreign ownership of telecoms companies in Hong Kong and there are no provisions for China's approval of ownership changes or licence awards in the treaties governing Hong Kong's handing over to China next year.

Beijing, however, has sought to assert its influence in large contracts and franchises in Hong Kong which span the handing over. China delayed approval for a new container terminal in the territory and continues to block the award of mobile telecoms licences by the Hong Kong government, citing disagreements over the development of the market.

It is thought that the BT executive travelling to China may be Mr Alfred Mockett, managing director of international operations.

It seems certain that the Chinese authorities will want to quiz the BT delegation on the progress of the negotiations.

Hong Kong Telecom's strategy in China also underlines the importance of Beijing's backing. The group and its parent company have agreed significant investments in China, including a 1994 agreement to spend \$300m (£197m) on building networks.

They have also developed close business ties. Dr Brian Smith, C&W chairman, visited China two months ago in the company of Mr Rod Olsen, acting chief executive, and Mr Jonathan Solomon, executive director of strategy.

Industry observers in Hong Kong said that in the case of a merger with C&W, BT would seek to reassure Beijing concerning Hong Kong Telecom's ongoing investments.

The two companies' financial advisers, N.M. Rothschild for BT and Goldman Sachs for C&W, were this week continuing with attempts to resolve the regulatory, business and political barriers which stand in the way of the merger.

See Lex

McAlpine falls £23.5m into red

By Motoko Rich

Losses on the closure of its general building division and other businesses forced Alfred McAlpine, the construction group, into the red last year.

Pre-tax losses of £23.5m compared with £10.7m profits in the 14 months to December 31 1994. The group changed its year-end from October to December at the end of 1993, making direct comparisons difficult.

Mr Oliver Whitehead, chief executive, said the bulk of the £34.7m exceptional charges were associated with the closure of the general building business, which made losses of £6.8m (£7.7m).

He said quitting that business, which built private sector offices, shops, factories and warehouses, would allow the group to focus on special projects in sports and under the private finance initiative.

The group has already secured a contract to build a football stadium in Blackpool and the preferred bidder to build a hospital in Herford.

"While our general building business had been generating sales up to £250m, it was making no money," said Mr Whitehead. "I am anticipating that the special projects business will fluctuate between £50m and £100m in sales but with

more reliable profitability."

Civil engineering profits fell to £200,000 (£1.7m) and the group took an exceptional charge of £1.2m. Profits in housebuilding fell to £11.5m (£17.8m).

In the US division, operating profits of £3.4m compared with £1.7m in the 14 month period.

Losses per share were 37.2p (earnings of 10.2p). The final dividend is held at 4p, making a total of 7p, the same as for the previous 14 months.

The shares rose 4p to 178p on Thursday.

• COMMENT

The rise in McAlpine's shares suggests the City believes the group has made a brave move in closing businesses. By taking the big hit now and cutting costs in its profitable civil engineering division, the group has put itself in a position to move forward unhampered by the general building albatross.

However, recovery in the housing sector is likely to be slow and in its new special projects business, it will be competing with larger construction companies on the private finance initiative. On pre-tax profit forecasts of £12.8m for 1995, the shares are trading on a p/e of 13.4, a discount to the market. Although bid rumours could add some shine to the share price, on its own, that seems fair value.



Oliver Whitehead (left) and Gavin Morris, finance director

Harland and Wolff reduces losses

By John Murray Brown in Dublin

Harland and Wolff, the Belfast shipyard, reported a reduction in pre-tax losses from £16.8m to £6.8m for 1995, helped by a drop in the provision made for future orders.

The Northern Ireland shipbuilder, which this week secured a contract worth an estimated £100m to build a floating production vessel for BP, said: "I am anticipating that the special projects business will fluctuate between £50m and £100m in sales but with

indirect subsidies by some countries."

Mr Fred Olsen, chairman, said 1995 had been a "year of transition" but expressed confidence the company had repositioned itself to take advantage of increased demand for floating platforms, estimated at between 30 and 40 over the next five years.

Harland and Wolff is in a consortium with BP, Brown & Root UK, Single Buoy Moorings of Monaco and Coflexip Stena Offshore to design and build a surface production facility for the deep-water field of Schiehallion, 185 miles west

of Shetland. The deal is worth £400m.

Mr Nielsen, said the company was not concentrating exclusively on new construction, but would also consider conversions of existing tankers to floating rigs. "We are cautiously optimistic that we will be successful in securing at least one major conversion project during 1996."

The results include increased bank borrowings through a £25.4m 8-year loan at 7.5 per cent to finance a capex bulk carrier, which is chartered by Trassey Shipping, its shipping subsidiary.

On Thursday, Pearson's share price rose 20p to 721p, close to an all-time high. The shares have been buoyed by bid speculation, a recent feature of the media sector.

Last month, Pearson reported a 23 per cent rise in 1995 pre-tax profits to £236.5m. The result was boosted by capital gains of £133m from the sale of a holding in Esky.

Operating profits fell by 5 per cent to £260m, including a near-£15m contribution from acquisitions. Sales increased 18 per cent to £1.55bn.

Elys hits back at Panther bid

The directors of Elys (Wimbledon), the department store, yesterday told shareholders they unanimously believed the offer from Panther Securities failed to reflect the value of the company.

Elys said 44 per cent of the Panther offer was represented by Elys' own cash balances, while the bid valued Elys' remaining assets at a mere 52p in the £1.

Trustees representing 39.1 per cent of the shares had informed the board it was not their intention to accept the present offer. Panther has made a two-tier offer for the 70.04 per cent of Elys shares it does not already own.

By Simon London, Property Correspondent

Falling industrial property values were behind a 3.4 per cent dip to 315p in net assets per share over 1995 at Bilton, the property company which specialises in the industrial sector.

The year-end property valuation, carried out by directors rather than external valuers, resulted in a 4 per cent decline to £306m in the value of the investment portfolio.

The company, in which the founding Bilton family controls a 29 per cent stake, let 350,000 sq ft of space. Less than 8 per cent of the portfolio is now

vacant. Bilton's biggest development project is at South Ruislip, west London, where it let a £2.000 sq ft distribution depot and plans to build a retail warehouse park.

Pre-tax profits declined to £18.2m, against £18.8m, which included a £800,000 contribution from sales of investment property. Gross rental income was unchanged at £25.2m.

The decline in property values led to an increase in gearing from 10.6 per cent to 12.2 per cent.

Earnings per share declined to 14.31p (14.75p). The proposed final dividend is 7.4p, making a total of 10.33p, an increase of 4 per cent.

On Thursday, Schroders' share price rose 10p to 94p on

an all-time high. The shares have been buoyed by bid speculation, a recent feature of the media sector.

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Operating

COMMODITIES AND AGRICULTURE

WEEK IN THE MARKETS
Squeeze lifts sugar futures

Nearby positions on the London Commodity Exchange white sugar market set fresh life-of-contract highs on Thursday as a relentless technical squeeze sent prices still higher. August, the second month, was \$30 a tonne in late trading, up \$6.10 on the day and \$20.90 on the week.

"At the moment it looks like people who are trying to physically cover something can't do it and are having to pay up," a trader told the Reuters news agency. "You're basically seeing people who are having to get out of positions or people who are long of the market who are just taking it up."

It was suggested that the current firmness of the London market could be attributed to undeliverable white sugar hedged against the May contract and the expected supply tightness of quality whites into the summer months.

"Nobody can sell any physical sugar, it's priced too high and none of the trade houses can create any physical off-take," said a trader.

In its latest Sugar Situation report London-based trade house E.D. F. Man said support for nearby delivery sugar prices had for some time been attributed to the absence of physical supplies. "But now that the physical raw sugar exports are more readily available and greater supplies from southern hemisphere origins are expected to get under way in late May/early June, this support is attributed more to the technical issue of the segregation of the terminal [futures] and the physical markets and logistical difficulties slowing the pace of available raw sugar supplies to the market."

Man said 1996 still appeared to be "a year of two halves", with increased raw sugar supplies in the second half expected to put prices under pressure. "The whites market,"

however, appears to have been stripped into many sections with tightness of European Union quality sugar likely to persist throughout the year in contrast to the overall availability of the poorer quality whites elsewhere. It concluded that, because of logistical difficulties, "a dearth of tendable origins and the tightness in physical European white sugar supplies are limiting the prospect of falling sugar prices."

The LME contracts had been tending lower during the week, notably the coffee market, in which nearby positions were more than \$100 a tonne down at one point. But short-covering and book-squaring ahead of the long weekend reduced losses on Thursday.

Cocoa's fall had been much more modest and the reappearance of US investment fund buying on Wednesday night was enough to send nearby futures values to fresh four-month highs on Thursday. The July position reached \$1,028 a tonne before retreating to \$1,004, up \$5 on the day and \$11 on the week.

The London cocoa market was "trading on the back of fear," one trader told Reuters. "It's fear and technicals pushing it."

At the London Metal Exchange most base metals contracts on Thursday repaired at least some of the damage done earlier in the week as copper led a general retreat.

The three months delivery copper price ended at \$2,479.75 a tonne, up \$35 on the day but still \$58 down on the week. Traders attributed the rally to short-covering and book-squaring and viewed the action as a correction within a longer-term downturn. "Everyone got themselves a little short in most of these markets and wants to cover," said one.

The strongest LME market on balance was lead. Continuing concern about nearby supply tightness restricted its early decline and encouraged the subsequent recovery. By Thursday's close the three-month delivery price was at \$800.50 a tonne, up \$16 on the day and \$11 on the week.

Richard Meeney

WEEKLY PRICE CHANGES

Latest price	Change year ago	1995
Price supplied by N M Rothschild		
Gold per troy oz	\$388.50	-3.05
Silver per troy oz	311.00*	-0.45
Aluminum 99.7% (soft)	\$160.50	-0.50
Copper Grade A (soft)	\$249.00	-0.50
Lead (soft)	\$62.00	+1.25
Zinc SHG (soft)	\$107.00	-11
tin (soft)	\$240.00	-0.50
Cocoa Futures May	\$265	-2
Coffee Futures May	\$1777	-22
Sugar (LDP Raw)	\$308.5	+0.5
Barley Futures May	\$112.00	-0.25
Wheat Futures May	\$244.95	-0.02
Cotton Outlook A (Index)	\$125	+0.30
Wool (5s Super)	\$20.10*	+0.20
Oil (Brent Blend)	\$20.10*	+0.20

For terms unless otherwise stated, *Per Tonnes. © Cents B. & May.

WORLD BOND PRICES

MARKET REPORT

By Samer Iskandar

US Treasuries reacted violently to the release of employment data yesterday, after a quiet week, while European markets were closed for the long Easter weekend.

The CBOT's June T-Bond future fell 24 points to end the truncated trading session at 109.12.

Futures contracts on three-month interest rates reflected anticipations of a 0.25 to 0.50 per cent rise in the third quarter of 1997.

In the cash market, the 30-year bond fell by 152 to 892, its yield rising to 6.84 per cent, from 6.68 per cent at the previous close.

"The market had closed on a negative note Thursday, already pricing in a bearish figure," said Mr Richard Gihoo, US Treasury strategist at Paribas Capital Markets in New York.

A revision to the number of job creations in February to 624,000, from 705,000 initially announced, was deemed insufficient by market participants. Furthermore, the US Labor Department announced 140,000

BENCHMARK GOVERNMENT BONDS

	Coupon	Date	Price	Day's change	Yield	Week ago	Month ago
Australia	10.000	02/06	107.9500	-0.068	8.79	8.99	8.72
Austria	6.000	02/06	92.6000	-0.120	8.45	8.54	8.63
Belgium	5.000	05/06	102.1800	-0.120	6.69	6.62	6.60
Canada	8.750	12/05	107.8000	-0.350	7.92	7.95	7.47
Denmark	5.000	03/06	103.8400	-0.050	7.44	7.50	7.71
France STAN	5.750	03/01	100.0500	-0.050	7.58	7.58	7.57
OAT	7.250	04/05	100.0500	-0.150	5.58	5.61	5.74
Germany Bund	6.000	04/05	97.1700	-0.150	6.26	6.46	6.42
Ireland	9.500	02/06	100.4700	-0.420	7.92	8.05	7.89
Italy	No 125	04/05	99.1610	-0.052	10.37	10.83	10.45
No 182	3.000	09/05	101.8500	-0.052	1.25	1.25	1.23
Netherlands	8.000	01/06	97.1500	-0.140	6.37	6.45	6.41
Portugal	11.975	01/06	104.1900	-0.180	9.44	9.61	9.71
Spain	8.000	02/06	98.1400	-0.275	8.45	8.47	8.37
Sweden	8.000	12/05	102.06	-1.32	7.43	7.55	7.21
UK Gilt	7.500	12/05	98.01	-0.232	8.04	8.05	8.07
7.000	12/05	98.01	-0.232	7.28	7.34	7.07	
8.000	10/06	100.18	-0.222	6.34	6.34	6.05	
US Treasury	5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	5.34	5.34	5.05
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	5.11	5.13	5.05	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	5.08	5.08	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	5.04	5.04	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	5.01	5.01	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.98	4.98	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.95	4.95	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.92	4.92	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.89	4.89	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.86	4.86	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.83	4.83	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.80	4.80	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.77	4.77	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.74	4.74	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.71	4.71	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.68	4.68	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.65	4.65	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.62	4.62	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.59	4.59	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.56	4.56	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.53	4.53	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.50	4.50	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.47	4.47	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.44	4.44	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.41	4.41	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.38	4.38	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.35	4.35	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.32	4.32	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.29	4.29	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.26	4.26	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.23	4.23	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.20	4.20	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.17	4.17	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.14	4.14	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.11	4.11	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.08	4.08	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.05	4.05	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	4.02	4.02	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.99	3.99	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.96	3.96	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.93	3.93	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.90	3.90	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.87	3.87	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.84	3.84	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.81	3.81	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.78	3.78	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.75	3.75	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182	3.72	3.72	4.95	
5.625	02/06	98.00	-0.182				

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

FINANCIAL TIMES

Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL
Tel: +44 171-873 3000 Telex: 922186 Fax: +44 171-407 5700
Saturday April 6 1996

Alliances in Ireland

Eight years after Patrick Pearse and his comrades seized the Dublin General Post Office, on Easter Sunday 1916, Britain still faces the threat of violence from Irish republicans who believe the revolution started that day remains incomplete. The IRA, in its 1996 Easter message, explicitly reaffirms its refusal to lay down its weapons. The memory of the Docklands bomb on February 9 is still fresh, and there is an all too familiar sense of tension in Britain this weekend. The IRA's threats are anything but idle.

This is all the more discouraging in that the British and Irish governments have now met the demand by Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, for a firm date on which all-party talks will start. The demand for prior "decommissioning" of some or all the IRA's weapons, which had been the main stumbling block, has been dropped. The only condition for Sinn Féin's participation is now "the unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994". But that is precisely what the IRA is refusing to give.

The enormous disappointment of February 9 has prompted many questions. Some focus on the circumstances in which the "peace process" broke down; in particular, on the extent to which the British government was to blame. Was it wise to dig in for so long on an issue it eventually had to concede? Having decided finally to give way, by accepting the Mitchell report, was it wise to obscure this fact by appearing to erect a new precondition in the shape of elections to an Ulster assembly?

But those are not the only, and perhaps not the most important questions. If the process was so fragile, was it not perhaps dawed from the outset? If the IRA was ready to resume violence on so flimsy a pretext, what was the value of Sinn Féin's commitment to pursue a settlement through "exclusively peaceful methods"?

Disappointed expectation

Unlike the Irish government and the other nationalist parties in Ireland (including the Social Democratic and Labour party in the north), Sinn Féin has still not accepted that Northern Ireland will remain part of the UK as long as the majority of its inhabitants so wish. If the IRA was persuaded to halt the violence in 1994 by leaders who argued that non-violent politics would now bring rapid progress towards a united Ireland, that expectation was bound to be disappointed and violence was bound to be resumed, sooner or later.

Many people feel the peace pro-

cess has concentrated too much on bringing in the extremists on both sides and too little on building trust between the mainstream parties representing the two communities. Comparison is often made with South Africa, where Mr F. W. de Klerk and Mr Nelson Mandela formed an alliance across the racial divide in order to steer their country away from violence. No such alliance has been formed between Mr John Hume, the SDLP leader, and Mr David Trimble of the Ulster Unionists.

Sisyphean task

Instead it is left to the two governments to discover common ground and then coax their respective protégés towards it. But this has proved a Sisyphean task, because the protégés are forever looking over their shoulders, fearing competition from more insidious forces within their own communities. Mr Hume has devoted all his energies to bringing Sinn Féin into the process. Mr Trimble has to compete with the Rev Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist party – and does so by insulting the most sympathetic Irish government unionists have ever had to deal with. Neither seems willing to give priority to good working relationships with the other.

Another question that has been asked is whether both governments have concentrated too much on negotiating with political parties which, however sincerely committed to non-violence, derive their *rason d'être* from the existence of separate communities with conflicting aspirations. Could more have been done to foster those many elements in Northern Irish civil society, starting with the business community, which operate across confessional boundaries and are anxious to free the province from its sectarian heritage? Might the peace process have fared better if more had been done to make members of the minority in Northern Ireland feel they were truly equal citizens, by tackling the "four ps": police, prisoners, poverty and party of esteem?

Perhaps. But it would be naive to imagine there is a quick fix to be found in any of these areas. The more the British government appears to lean towards the minority, the more suspicious and defensive the majority will become. In the end, it is the unionists who have to be persuaded that the Irish identity of their Catholic fellow citizens does not threaten them. And it is the IRA which, by continuing to threaten them with actual violence, makes the task of persuasion so appallingly difficult.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL

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Wrong view of electorate

From Mr Richard Britton

Sir: Philip Stephens demonstrates a worrying lack of contact with the electorate about which he makes such confident assertions ("Invitation to honesty in the halfway house", April 3). While accepting that the electorate "dislikes the idea of being pushed around by foreigners" he contradicts himself by saying voters regard sovereignty as a "political abstraction".

What is sovereignty if not a desire for the country in which one lives to make decisions without being "pushed around by foreigners"?

He has it quite the wrong way round to claim that voters do not understand this issue while, according to him, readily understanding "the link between Europe and prosperity". It is that which remains a "political abstraction" to the great mass of the British public.

Richard Britton,
Old Nursery Lodge,
Silver St,
Salisbury,
Wiltshire, SP5 3AN, UK

Cause for concern over single currency

From Mr Selwyn Hodson-Pressinger

Sir: Many who worked in Europe in recent years, like me, appreciated the merits of a common currency. It was something the D-Mark was already fast resembling, being Europe's common currency by reference. For this reason many of us were initially enthusiastic about a single currency, which seemed a logical progression from the common currency.

However, the full implications of Emu and the difficulties arising from Maastricht's timetable for the imposition of a single currency give genuine cause for concern. To maintain the present momentum

for currency union looks increasingly impractical in view of prevailing economic conditions. This is surely not the manner in which to defend the Franco-German axis and the cause of European integration. Sadly, Emu is not on the agenda of the intergovernmental conference which has just begun, but events may well ensure it receives the serious attention it deserves.

As for issues set out in the UK government's recent white paper on Europe, they are clearly of great importance to be traded off lightly during these IGC negotiations. The UK must ensure its prime objective

is generally understood: to remain a European partner, but only on terms that are acceptable.

Britain's IGC negotiations would clearly benefit from the threat of a British plebiscite on the country's continued full membership of the EU, not just on the single currency issue (as discussed in your article "Referendum for a rainy day", April 3). Such a sword of Damocles hanging over the IGC proceedings should ensure UK interests were properly protected.

Selwyn Hodson-Pressinger,
17 Place des Reignaux,
59800 Lille, France

Minimum wage and unemployment link tenuous

From Dr Stephen Bazen and Prof Mark P. Taylor

Sir: Michael Prowse ("Jobless by decree", April 1) is dismissive of serious research on the effects of minimum wage legislation but is confident enough to conclude that such legislation is "foolish" on the basis of his own back-of-the-envelope calculations and his unsubstantiated claim that minimum wage laws have "substantially increased unemployment" in Europe. On the last point, the experience of France is worth examining since the relatively high French unemployment rate is a stock piece of evidence in these arguments.

French competitiveness has improved substantially relative to the UK over the past 10 years – relative unit labour costs have fallen 3 per cent compared with a 3 per cent fall for the UK, even taking into account the devaluation of sterling. Moreover, the value of the

French minimum wage relative to average earnings has fallen over the same period and fewer people actually earn the minimum (8 per cent in 1994 compared with 12 per cent in 1989). Hence, it is difficult to see how the minimum wage – or stronger social protection laws more generally – have made France less competitive and undermined profitability.

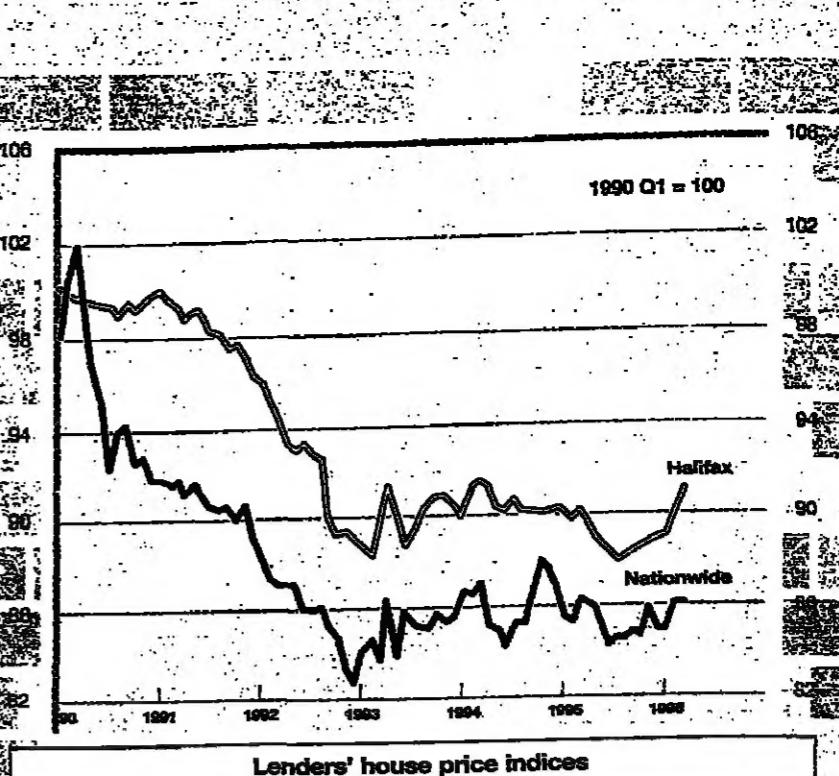
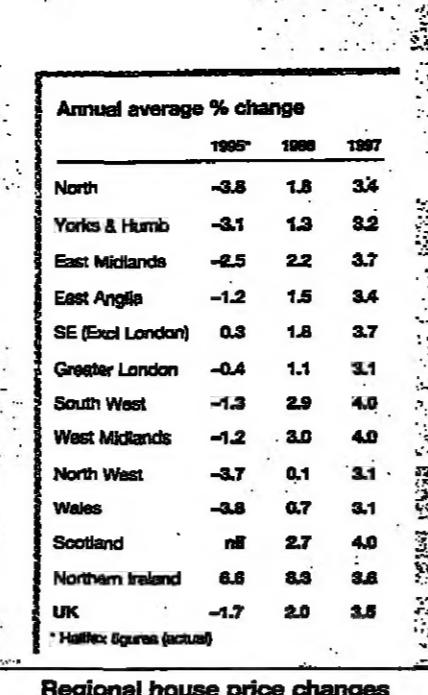
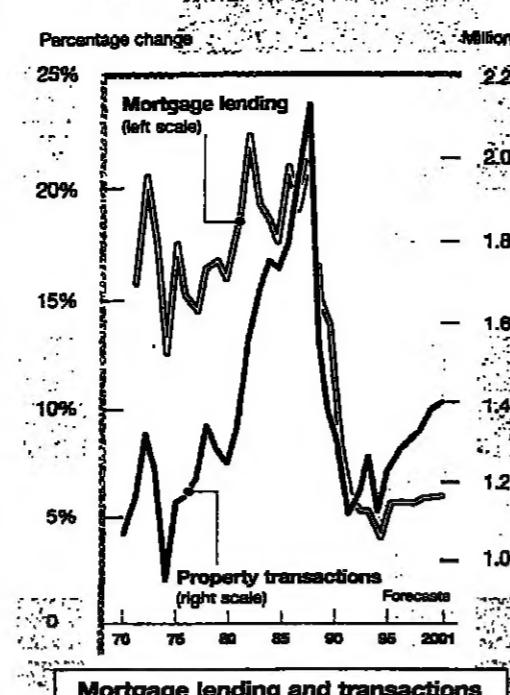
The causes of French unemployment are more complex. The strong franc policy has had the desired effects of moderating both inflation and pay awards but it has had a deflationary impact on consumer and capital expenditure. The effects of this are exacerbated as the government has decided to cut the budget deficit in order to meet the Maastricht criteria for European monetary union. In addition, several important sectors of the French economy – notably agriculture, finance and the civil service – are at present undergoing

a period of restructuring which generally involves downsizing. But clearly France's relatively high unemployment is not caused by the minimum wage or by higher levels of social protection than are enjoyed in the UK. The link between the minimum wage and unemployment is similarly tenuous in other European countries.

Mr Prowse's article is an interesting exercise in drawing a crooked line between an unwarranted assumption and a foregone conclusion but it should not be taken seriously.

Stephen Bazen,
Department of Economics,
Bordeaux University,
Mark P. Taylor,
Department of Economics,
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France

UK property: off the floor



Reasons to be wary

Robert Chote on the latest recovery in the UK housing market

Like the Grand National and the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, sightings of "recovery" in the housing market have become a traditional ritual of the British spring. As the clocks go forward, so the nation's estate agents shake off their winter gloom and proclaim that this time – maybe – the upturn is going to last.

The evidence of recovery is clear to see. House prices are rising at their fastest rate for six years, mortgage lending is accelerating and more people are traipsing around suburban show homes, mentally putting new curtains and carpet. But we have seen it all before. In three of the past four years, the housing market has surged in the early months of the year only to fall flat after Easter. This time the omens are promising, but there are still reasons to be wary of a setback.

For the moment, though, the news is good. Halifax Building Society reported this week that its national index of house prices had risen for the eighth successive month in March and by the largest amount in two years. Over the past three months, house prices have risen at a rate equivalent to nearly 10 per cent a year, taking the average to 263,210. But this has in effect only reversed the decline seen early last year.

Demand for home loans has meanwhile been increasing. Net mortgage lending by the UK's biggest banks increased to a seasonally adjusted £25.5bn in February, from £25.7bn in the previous month.

But the market still has a mountain of misery to climb. Many homeowners have yet to come to terms with substantial losses. And prices show few signs of improvement.

on in the same month a year ago. Mr Joe Dwyer, chief executive of Wimpey, the UK's largest housebuilder, says the number of visitors to – and sales of – new homes so far this year has been much the same as in the equivalent period of last year, but with builders operating from fewer sites this represents an underlying improvement.

The House Builders' Federation also recently reported a rise in the volume of people visiting sites and reserving properties, while the number of completed transactions has also picked up.

But will this recovery endure, where others have fizzled out? The present momentum bodes well, analysts believe. "With mortgage rates having fallen to their lowest level for 30 years, this is likely to maintain," argues Mr David Walton, economist at Goldman Sachs, the

investment bank. As a proportion of income, mortgage payments are now at their lowest level since the late 1970s. Interest rates may start rising again at some stage in the next few months, but competition among lenders is expected to help keep mortgage rates relatively low.

"Affordability, having improved sharply since end-1990, will deteriorate somewhat in 1997 as the base rate rises," says Mr Kern of NatWest Group. "However, with the base rate forecast to average 6.3 per cent over the next few years, housing will remain by historical standards very affordable between now and 2001."

The housing market should also grow sharply, though prices will not be growing as quickly as they have in recent months. Mr Shepherdson says. But he adds that house prices will still end the year 5 per cent higher than they started it.

Unless mortgage approvals pick up sharply, then prices will not be growing as quickly as they have in recent months," Mr Shepherdson says. But he adds that house prices will still end the year 5 per cent higher than they started it.

The housing market should also grow sharply, though prices will not be growing as quickly as they have in recent months. Mr Shepherdson says. But he adds that house prices will still end the year 5 per cent higher than they started it.

they were thinking of buying a big house at £20,000, they were worried about it going down to £20,000 in 12 months. Now people feel that won't happen." In such a conservative market, it is not surprising that smaller, cheaper homes have fared better.

Few expect wonders from what used to be the traditional Easter rush to buy homes. "Still the Easter myth persists," says Mr Veitch, "with all the clients thinking this is the best time to advertise. Then everyone moans they had no response. I'm afraid it will be the same story next year too."

Richard Wolffe

Nº 1

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COMMENT & ANALYSIS

Man in the News · Shimon Peres

Unpaid dreamer wakes up

Israel's prime minister is remoulding himself for the election, says Julian Ozanne

Only two years ago Shimon Peres, Israel's prime minister, borrowed words from Gabriel García Márquez, the novelist, and described himself as an "unpaid dreamer".

It seemed fitting for a man who appeared destined to sit out his career as number two to Yitzhak Rabin, then the prime minister. Mr Peres forged bold, and sometimes fanciful, ideas about a new Middle East while Rabin worried about the domestic constituency.

The Rabin-Peres double act, which had dominated Labour party politics since the early 1970s, seemed a winning combination in a revolutionary era of making peace with Arab foes. As Rabin, a former army chief, talked and acted tough with the Palestinians, playing to the deep-rooted fears of Israelis about their personal security, Mr Peres pressed the peace agenda on a reluctant Rabin and an unsure nation.

But the assassination of Rabin last November and the assumption of the premiership by Mr Peres deprived the double act of its bad cop and has left Mr Peres scrambling to rebuild his image.

As he prepares for the May 29 general election, Mr Peres's dreaming days seem an electoral liability. He is burying his visionary ideas and dusting down his hardline rhetoric.

This week he dropped a political bombshell by saying he would seek a referendum among Israelis - a risky proposition with an uncertain outcome - on a final peace agreement with Palestinians, embracing the future status of Jerusalem, of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, and of Palestinian state-

anon, have forced Mr Peres to talk and act tough. He has sealed Israel's borders with the Palestinians and ordered demolitions of Palestinian homes. Senior Palestinian officials say such policies would cause their immediate withdrawal from the peace talks.

Mr Peres, born in White Russia in 1923, is already guaranteed a place in history. He has held almost every ministerial post and played a role in most of Israel's crises since its birth in 1948. But his election victory would establish him as the pre-eminent Israeli peacemaker and would allow him to complete his vision of restructuring the Middle East.

Mr Peres faces a formidable challenge, however. A spate of suicide bombings by Palestinian extremists opposed to peace hit at his Achilles heel: his perceived inability to keep Israel safe. The attacks also destroyed the substantial lead he had in opinion polls over Mr Netanyahu.

The Palestinian attacks, combined with an increased number of attacks by Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon, who has said he would

not negotiate directly with Mr Arafat, the Palestinian president, opposed territorial concessions on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Senior Palestinian officials say such policies would cause their immediate withdrawal from the peace talks.

In the wake of the suicide bombings he persuaded world leaders to come to an anti-terror summit in Egypt to express their support for Israel. He also convinced US President Bill Clinton to come to Israel for the third time in his administration.

Mr Peres has also dropped his visionary speeches of a new Middle East. He used to say it would be a region dominated by "banks not tanks, ballots not bullets where the only generals will be General Motors and General Electric".

Instead he is banging the war drums. He now talks about a physical separation between Arab and Jew rather than integration and co-operation.

"My belief in the vision of a new Middle East does not

shake my complete commitment to national security," he said this week. It is unclear how much of a genuine conversion Mr Peres has undergone. But it is obvious that he desperately needs to combat the negative image he has of being incapable of safeguarding security measures.

This public view of Mr Peres is deeply ingrained. In the four elections he has fought as leader of the Labour party he has failed to win a single outright victory. In the macho world of Israeli politics, up to now dominated by generals and those who fought for the creation of the Jewish state, Mr Peres' long history of working inside Labour and government bureaucracy has been a liability.

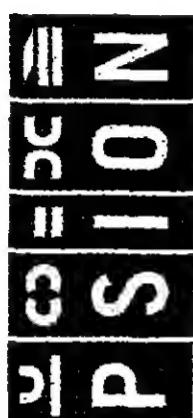
He is often seen as the consummate politician, the inveterate insider and a schemer," says Mr Danny Ben-Simon of the leftwing *Davar Rishon* newspaper. "It's not a fair image because he has done as much as anyone to build up Israel's security and defence forces. But it remains the single biggest obstacle he once believed himself to be.

to his chances of victory. Since the sharp fall in his popularity following the suicide attacks Mr Peres has clawed back a narrow lead. The latest opinion poll gave Mr Peres 51 per cent of the vote to 45 per cent for Mr Netanyahu. But he knows that, with seven weeks to go, such a lead is too close to comfort.

Next week, after Passover, Israel will get full-blown election fever and Mr Peres will have to brace himself for a hard-fought and probably vicious campaign.

Recent polls have proved there are many floating voters who will decide the outcome of the election. If the security situation remains quiet - and Mr Arafat delivers on his promise to amend the Palestinian covenant calling for the destruction of the Jewish state - Mr Peres is in with a fighting chance. But another round of Islamist attacks would destroy his campaign.

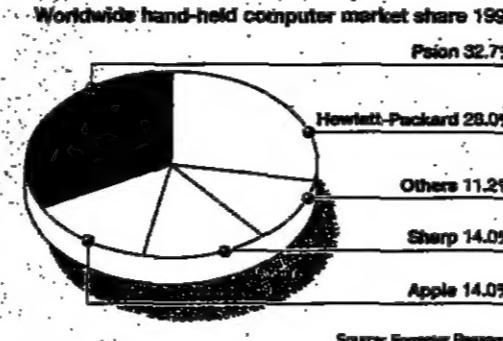
Such a development could lose Israel its opportunity to solve the Middle East conflict once and for all. At least for the four-year term of a right-wing government, the hopes of Middle East peace would be on hold. For Mr Peres, defeat would mean a departure from active politics. That would force him, perhaps for the first time in his life, actually to become the "unpaid dreamer" he once believed himself to be.



Psion: David among the Goliaths

	1994	1995	% change
Gross profit (£m)	165.23	201.53	+21.4%
Profit before tax (£m)	4.22	7.45	+77%
Earnings per share	14.4p	22.2p	+53%
Final dividend	2.40p	3.60p	+48%
Total dividends for the year	3.80p	5.40p	+43%

Source: Psion



The appliance of science

Paul Taylor on the maker of a gadget that today's executives cannot bear to be without

More over, Psion, here comes Psion. If the leather-bound personal organiser was the yuppie symbol of the high-spending 1980s, the discreet pocket-sized Psion is the hand-held computer is the gadget every executive must have today.

Psion, a 16-year-old British company, has taken some clever electronic engineering and turned it into the closest thing to a technological fashion accessory.

For many Psion owners, life without their sleek battleship-grey electronic companion - complete with miniature keyboard - is unthinkable. Some executives even have two, in case they lose one.

These machines - which fit in the palm of a hand - are the powerful successors to the early electronic organisers which incorporated four basic functions: diary, address book, calculator and clock.

Today's Psion has as much computing power as many desktop machines and a range of software to match. In addition to the built-in software, which includes a word processor, a spreadsheet, dozens of supplementary programs are available, ranging from electronic maps to wine guides.

The brand loyalty that the London-based company has built up has helped it successfully take on the giants of the worldwide computer and consumer electronics industry and secure leadership of the \$300m world-hand-held computer market. It now manufactures one out of every three hand-held computers sold worldwide. Last year it posted a 78 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £1.7m.

Psion is now valued on the stock market at £235m, up from just £3m at the time of its 1988 market debut, with the

state held by Mr David Potter, chairman and chief executive, valued at £85m. Last year alone, the workforce at its manufacturing sites in Greenford, west London, and Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire expanded by 50 per cent to 900.

But the picture has not always been so rosy. In the early 1990s the recession and the high cost of new product development plunged the company £2m into the red and sent the share price tumbling.

Many in the City were ready to write off Psion as another British high-tech blunder which - like Sinclair Electronics with its 280 computers and Acorn Computer - made popular products but lacked the business skills needed for long-term commercial success.

However, Psion - which once made mainly hand-held industrial machines for stock-taking and meter-reading - has confounded the pessimists by exploiting a niche in the market for comparatively low-priced and easy-to-use handheld personal computers.

Last year the company sold 300,000 of its innovative Series 3 machines at prices ranging from £250 to £400. Hand-held computers account for just under two-thirds of Psion's £90.5m of sales, with other products including software and modem communications devices.

Mr Potter, an energetic 52-year-old who began his career as a mathematician and physicist but dislikes being referred to as a "boffin", raised the seed capital for Psion by speculating on shares in a duvet-maker.

When he founded the group,

with his wife as the other main shareholder, he wanted to call it "simply 'Ps'", after the Greek letter. But he discovered a US company with the same initials, so he added the letters 'on' "to make it sound grander - like Exxon".

While maintaining close links with academia, he is critical of the UK academic system which he believes fails to provide scientists and engineers with enough basic business training. The result, he argues,

is that while UK companies are renowned for technical innovation, few have translated this into commercial success.

In the past he has also been critical of the City, arguing that it has failed to back and support British technological innovation. Nevertheless he believes that, with the right encouragement, companies such as his own can compete effectively with their rivals in North America and Japan.

At present he believes the biggest challenge facing Psion is "the speed at which the market is growing". This means the company has to keep expanding production just to maintain its market share. But he claims the group's technology is at least 15 months ahead of its rivals in terms of functionality and ease of use.

He believes that what has set Psion apart is a combination of its technological edge and the careful execution of an effective business strategy. "Having a good idea is just a small part of business success," he says, "the rest involves factors like manufacturing, distribution and marketing."

He believes that what has set Psion apart is a combination of its technological edge and the careful execution of an effective business strategy.

First on the Makati club's list is President Fidel Ramos, who has frequently denied accusations that he is planning to change the country's constitution so that he can run a second term for the presidency in 1998. His favourite resort,

the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club and headquarters of the Asian Development Bank - where the two indicators have also quadrupled over the same period. Wack Wack's shares are trading at about 10m pesos.

Mr José Crespo, general manager of the Manila Golf and Country Club, says the parallel holds good as far back as the 1960s. "When I joined in 1959, membership dues were around 9,000 pesos," he says. "Now it is up to 24m. This tells the story of what has happened to Manila property prices since then."

According to Mr Crespo, the soaring cost of golf club membership reflects the rising popularity of the sport. Once considered a game for bored expatriates, golf has become an obsession for the Philippines

business community. With the zeal of converts, the country's businessmen - and, more recently, businesswomen - have invested huge sums in the hope of finding themselves next to the governor of the central bank or the chairman of San Miguel brewery on the ninth hole.

A quick scan of the list of the Makati club's 537 members is the equivalent of flicking through a condensed version of Who's Who in the UK. And, as in some of Britain's more exclusive establishments, members can anonymously blackball hopeful applicants.

First on the Makati club's list is President Fidel Ramos, who has frequently denied accusations that he is planning to change the country's constitution so that he can run a second term for the presidency in 1998. His favourite resort,

when challenged about it, is that he intends to spend the rest of his life on the golf course. This has done little to reassure his critics, who point to the number of meetings that he holds on the fairway.

Underneath the president is a roll-call of the country's top executives and their foreign counterparts. The membership of the late Ferdinand Marcos is now in the hands of the former dictator's estate.

Manila's other clubs and courses reflect a similar pattern. At Ayala, for example, a prosperous southern suburb, the golf and country club's membership list is an index of that district's business luminaries. Its proprietary shares are trading at about 3.8m pesos.

Mr Brian Frederick, chief executive of the Hong Kong & Shanghai

Bank in the Philippines, says that the bank's Manila Golf membership card is an indispensable ticket for business networking.

"One should not exaggerate the number of business deals actually clinched on the golf course," says Mr Frederick. "But there is no doubt about the fact that it is a very important part of the process."

Trading in the country's golf and sports club shares is more informal than in cities such as Tokyo, where the Nikkei index of golf club shares, can be off at 200m pesos a year.

"At the moment, we only have three brokers officially trading club shares," says Charly Manzano, an executive at Metroland, a property and stockbroking firm. "There

are plenty of others doing it on a freelance basis, though." She says that trading in golf shares is becoming more sophisticated every month, with members leaving out their playing rights for up to 600,000 pesos a year.

Clubs, meanwhile, are forging reciprocal playing deals with overseas counterparts. Members of the Manila Club, for example, can play at the Royal Bangkok Golf Club in Thailand, while Wack Wack's golfers can tee off at Tokyo's Club 300 when on business in Japan.

"I am one of the few people who find the game deadly boring because it is so slow," admits Ms Manzano. "However, if I set up my own company there wouldn't be much choice. This is the way business is done in the Philippines. I'd have to force myself to like golf."

A t present, there are 125 Imax installations worldwide, and the company is working on orders for 44 more. Similarly, Showmax has 51 installations, most of which are in theme parks and leisure centres, including one at the Trocadero Showmax recently introduced Showmax, a cinema-style format, to compete against Imax in that market, but the latter company is suing for breach of copyright.

The Hollywood studios are also liaising with technology experts on other futuristic forms of cinema such as interactive films, where the audience determines the plot. The results of this research will be used in conventional cinemas and in the theme parks run by the studios' parent companies.

The commercial prospects of Imax and other new formats will be determined by the quality of the films. "It's critical," says Mr Ben Freedman, director of Robins Cinemas which operates the Showmax installation at the Trocadero. "People will come once for the technological experience, but they will only come back if there's something new to see."

At present, the Imax theatre opened in October 1994 and has since been sold out for most performances.

Mr Barrie Loeks, who co-chairs Sony Theatres, said the company was "very, very pleased" with its progress. Sony has already premiered another Imax film, *Across the Sea of Time*, and plans to produce up to three a year. It will open an Imax theatre in Tokyo this autumn and a third in San Francisco late next year. Another will be in the flagships Sony Centre at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin.

The turning point came two years ago when Sony launched *Wings of Courage*, the first Imax film featuring a Hollywood star, director and studio. One of the main motivations for Sony, the Japanese electronics group, when it acquired the Columbia-TriStar studios in 1989 was to apply its technological expertise to the film-making process.

Sony converted its cinemas at Lincoln Square in New York into a state-of-the-art complex of conventional theatres and an Imax 3D unit with a 80-by-100-ft screen. It commissioned *Wings of Courage* so it would be shown in 3D format, to compete against Imax in that market, but the latter company is suing to show there.

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"We're still a long way off seeing a *Die Hard* on Imax," says Sony's Ms Loeks. "And we're not going to see Imax or anything else take over from conventional theatres in the foreseeable future. But there's clearly demand for them as an alternative - and they're fun!"

Membership of Manila's leading golf clubs has become an important element in setting up deals in the Philippines, says Edward Luce

The above-par place for business

Manila's golfers think they have found a way of predicting trends in the Philippine capital's excitable property market. The method is simple: track the price of Manila Golf and Country Club membership shares and the broader property market will follow.

A glance at the recent movement of the exclusive club's proprietary shares - one of which must be purchased before a membership application is submitted - backs up the thesis.

Since 1983, the price of these shares has quadrupled to about 24m pesos (250,000), overtaking rates at Tokyo's most expensive courses. In the same period, real estate prices in Makati, Manila's business district, where the 30-hectare club is situated, have similarly rocketed by about four times, to \$10,000 per square metre.

The story is identical in Manila's

MARKETS REPORT

Dollar dawdles

By Philip Gavith

A stronger than expected March payrolls report in the US yesterday failed to provide fresh direction to the dollar which remained confined to the fairly narrow ranges which have characterised trading recently.

Although bond prices fell quite sharply as traders concluded that the report made any early cut in US interest rates less likely, the dollar did not follow suit, initially it rallied around half a penny to DM1.4850, but then slipped back to close in London at DM1.4826. Against the yen it finished at Y107.46.

Trade was very thin on account of the London market being closed for Easter, and US markets only staying open until lunchtime.

The payrolls report had been keenly anticipated following the freakishly strong February report, which spooked the US

bond market, without having much impact on the dollar. When markets re-open in earnest next week, the strength of the US economy may have an impact on the dollar, but there was little evidence of this yesterday.

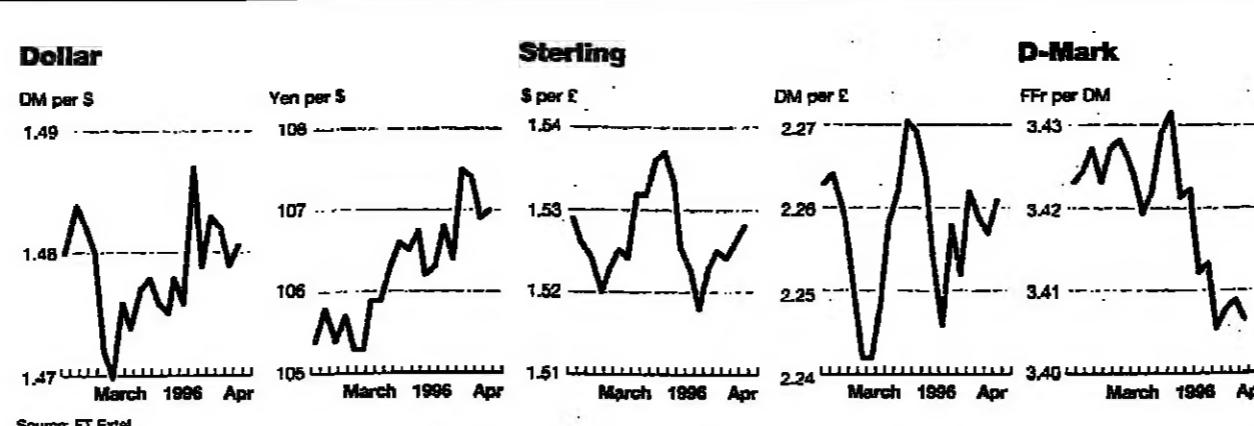
■ Klaus Said, head of foreign exchange at JP Morgan in New York, said the dollar was "stuck", with illiquid trading conditions probably being the

■ **Pound in New York**

Apr 5	... Close ...	Prev close ...
E spot	1.3035	1.3020
1 month	1.3020	1.3020
3 months	1.3025	1.3020
1 yr	1.3210	1.3154

only factor capable of generating a decent move. "I favour the upside, but I don't have a position to support it."

He said he was more confident of the dollar rallying against the yen than against the D-Mark. Earlier in the week the dollar reached a 26



Source: FT Ertl

month high against the yen, before falling back on renewed fears of a monetary tightening in Japan which would support the yen. These stemmed from comments by Mr Yasuo Matsushita, the governor of the Bank of Japan.

Ahead of the job report, Mr Eisaku Sakakibara, director of the international division of Japan's Ministry of Finance, said that these fluctuations "seemed to have ended".

The BOJ had earlier acted decisively on Thursday morning by injecting a larger than

expected amount of liquidity into the market in its morning operations. This offset the appreciation of the yen, and countered the suggestions that interest rates were set to rise.

Mr Said said the dollar "doesn't want to go anywhere" against the D-Mark. "There is just no interest. There is absolutely nothing going on." He said any move at the moment was likely to be chart-driven, rather than the product of any fundamental analysis.

Mr Joe Prendergast, economist at Merrill Lynch in London, points out that the dollar D-Mark rate traded in a 6.45 pfenning range, from high to low, during the first quarter. "This compares with an average 14.25 pfenning range in the same quarter in the past ten years, and 15.9 pfenning in the past five years," he said.

The one fairly new factor in the market is the decoupling of the dollar from the performance of the bond market. This leaves open the prospect that the dollar may rally on the prospect of higher short-term interest rates, although there has not yet been any evidence of this.

■ On Thursday the South African rand was a focus of attention following the slide to a historic low of R4.13 against the dollar earlier in the week. Nerves were calmed after Mr Trevor Manuel, the new finance minister, reiterated the government's commitment to a gradual easing of exchange controls. Mr Chris Stals, the central bank governor, also confirmed that he planned to stay in office until 1999.

POUND SPOT FORWARD AGAINST THE POUND

Apr 5	Closing mid-point	Change on day	Bid/offer spread	Day's Mid low	One month low	One month %pa	Three months %pa	One year %pa	Bank of England index
Europe									
Austria	80.9374	-0.0356	82.0 - 82.7	15.9496	15.9185	15.8718	2.3	15.8249	2.8
Belgium	80.5742	-0.0215	81.4 - 81.7	46.6010	46.4970	46.2592	2.7	45.3862	2.7
Denmark	80.7508	-0.0201	83.5 - 84.8	8.7500	8.7300	8.7142	1.7	8.6075	1.5
Finland	80.7014	-0.0212	81.5 - 82.0	7.0500	7.0200	7.0120	1.5	6.9700	1.4
France	80.7118	-0.0201	82.0 - 82.4	7.7028	7.6728	7.6581	1.8	10.9828	2.7
Germany	80.2663	-0.0055	85.8 - 86.4	2.2715	2.2631	2.2513	2.7	2.2045	2.7
Greece	80.61215	-0.063	86.3 - 86.7	365.367	364.367	364.367	-	66.3	-
Ireland	80.9697	-0.0001	88.7 - 89.0	9.7076	9.6985	9.6985	0.9	9.9675	0.9
Italy	80.5982	-0.0218	82.7 - 83.0	2.6500	2.6466	2.6466	1.7	2.6119	2.7
Luxembourg	80.5118	-0.0212	81.2 - 81.5	2.3015	2.2919	2.2888	2.0	2.2633	1.9
Netherlands	80.5317	-0.0047	82.7 - 83.6	2.5238	2.5238	2.5238	2.6	2.5155	2.6
Norway	80.8025	+0.0118	82.3 - 82.7	9.8200	9.7988	9.7972	1.1	9.7781	1.1
Portugal	80.2344	-0.0243	84.9 - 85.1	63.1	63.1	63.0261	2.0	63.065	2.0
Spain	80.5753	-0.0214	81.2 - 81.4	12.734	12.6121	12.6029	1.0	12.5823	1.0
Sweden	80.1517	-0.0214	82.4 - 82.6	61.0	60.929	60.8686	-0.1	60.1545	0.1
Switzerland	80.1277	-0.0204	82.6 - 82.7	1.8213	1.8213	1.8213	4.2	1.8088	4.2
UK	80.2179	-0.0024	17.0 - 18.0	1.2199	1.2158	1.2158	1.3	1.2136	1.4
Ecu	80.45900	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SDR	80.45900	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Americas									
Argentina	1.6293	-0.0012	1.708 - 1.709	1.5011	1.5011	1.5011	-	-	-
Brazil	1.5088	-0.0009	1.607 - 1.611	1.5111	1.5107	1.5107	-	-	-
Canada	1.5742	-0.0001	1.74 - 1.74	2.0774	2.0711	2.0735	0.4	2.0895	0.8
Mexico	1.5523	-0.0016	1.700 - 1.707	11.5287	11.4960	11.4960	-	11.5283	0.6
USA	1.5234	-0.0015	1.708 - 1.710	1.5131	1.5125	1.5125	0.5	1.5127	0.5
Pacific/Middle East/Africa									
Australia	1.5915	-0.0024	1.60 - 1.605	1.5057	1.5057	1.5057	-	-	-
Hong Kong	1.5614	-0.0014	1.61 - 1.615	11.8957	11.8957	11.8953	0.8	11.8917	0.3
India	1.52168	-0.0008	1.64 - 1.645	5.1018	5.1018	5.1018	-	-	-
Ireland	1.47902	-0.0043	1.58 - 1.585	4.7981	4.7981	4.7981	-	-	-
Japan	1.4786	-0.0018	1.62 - 1.624	164.160	163.988	163.985	5.3	162.068	5.3
Malaysia	1.4628	-0.0046	1.68 - 1.684	6.3873	6.3873	6.3873	-	-	-
New Zealand	1.2236	-0.0015	1.705 - 1.707	2.4230	2.4230	2.4234	-2.7	2.3538	-2.2
Peru	1.4638	-0.0008	1.508 - 1.509	1.4015	1.4015	1.4015	-	-	-
Spain	1.4248	-0.0165	1.508 - 1.511	1.280	1.280	1.280	-	-	-
Sweden	1.4822	-0.0204	1.555 - 1.555	2.333	2.333	2.333	-	-	-
Switzerland	1.4749	-0.0227	1.542 - 1.543	1.307	1.307	1.307	-	-	-
UK	1.4675	-0.0211	1.722 - 1.726	2.296	2.296	2.296	-	-	-
Canada	1.4219	-0.0211	1.703 - 1.704	1.093	1.093	1.093	-	-	-
US	1.4246	-0.0204	1.650 - 1.651	1.0534	1.0534	1.0534	-	-	-
Japan	1.3824	-0.0206	1.700 - 1.701	1.379	1.379	1.379	-	-	-
Ecu	1.3823	-0.0203	1.700 - 1.701	1.060	1.060	1.060	-	-	-
Danish Krone, French Franc, Norwegian Krone, and Swedish Krona per 100, Belgian Franc, Yen, Ecuador, Lira and Peseta per 100.									

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Weekend FT



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The miracle on breakfast radio

Philip Crowe beams up the evangelists for a talk show grilling on how they edited the good news

Presenter: Good morning. With me this morning are four men. They are all authors, responsible for some of the best-known writing in all literature. Their work has been translated into virtually every language. And all four were invoked to guard the beds of Victorian children. They are Mark, Matthew, Luke and John.

John, may I come to you first and start straight in with the most controversial aspect of your work? To put it starkly, you stand accused of fermenting anti-Semitism. You seem never to pass up an opportunity to run down the Jews or to blame them for the death of Jesus Christ. People have suggested seriously that the roots of the Holocaust stretch back into the Gospel which you wrote.

John: Very disturbing charges they are. But let me

put them in the context of when I was writing. I wrote my account a little later than the other three, when we'd had time to absorb the cataclysmic events in Jerusalem. The destruction of the City, and of the Temple, was shattering. The Jews, more than the Romans, were held responsible for the death of Jesus and Christians had a rough time from some of the Jews.

We thought that the destruction of the Temple might be a judgment of the Temple might be a judgment of God.

Presenter: But a Jewish historian has estimated that the Romans killed or captured more than 1m Jews at that time. If that's God's judgment, then it's horrendous, a dreadful revenge for the death of one man or for causing trouble to his followers. It's out of all proportion. What kind of God would do that?

John: I didn't ever make any explicit connection between

the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans...

Presenter: Maybe not, but it's implied. And Matthew, you make the connection explicit in some of the parables you record. What about the story of the marriage feast, where you tell us that the King was so angry with those who wouldn't come that he sent his soldiers and destroyed them and burnt their city? Or the response which you tell us the Jews all made when Pilate washed his hands - they all replied, his blood be on us and on our children. You seem to be blaming a whole race for the wrong done by a few.

Matthew: Yes, it's usually John who gets the blame for this, but the interpretation some of us put on the stories Jesus told was added in the light of what had happened to Jerusalem. At the time, it was a widespread understanding

and it was held by some Jews as well as by most Christians. But I make no excuses for it. We were wrong. And if we'd known the use people would make of it, I'm sure we would have written differently.

John: Besides, we offered no encouragement to people, and particularly not to Christians, to persecute or to kill anyone.

Presenter: But some of the sayings of Jesus are very severe, condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, and particularly all that talk about the fires of hell and eternal punishment.

Luke: Jesus was at his most severe when he met up with self-righteousness or hypocrisy. He'd probably have had something to say about the hypocrisy of today's tabloids...

Presenter: And The Daily Telegraph.

Mark: I recorded those sayings about hell in my account, but people then knew what

Jesus was talking about. There were no civic amenities. People took their rubbish and threw it over the city walls into the fires in the Valley of Gehenna. They were always smouldering, never went out. It was a way of saying that some people are good for nothing. But Jesus said nothing about everlasting punishment. To use your own words, "What kind of God would do that?"

John: And don't forget those remarkable accounts of forgiveness.

Presenter: Well, one of the most remarkable is in your Gospel, but only in the margin or added at the end like an appendix. Why is that? Didn't you write it?

John: You mean the story of the woman who was to be stoned for adultery. No, it didn't come from me.

Luke: I wrote it. I had it almost straight from one of the people who were there, that's

where all the detail comes from. But some prudish monk left it out when he was copying my manuscript.

The bit about her being caught in adultery, in the very act, probably fired his imagination. The early church was no different from today.

It made more of sexual wrongs than political sins, and this story was too lewd for them. When they did eventually put it back into the gospels, after about 500 years, they added it to John's account instead of mine.

Presenter: You tell us that Jesus wrote something in the dust with his finger, but you don't tell us what.

Luke: He didn't write anything. They'd used sticks to drive the woman towards him. She was considered unclean. That's why she was to be put to death by stoning, so that no one would have to touch her. Jesus was so angry he just

bent down and ran his finger through the dust.

When he could bring himself to speak, he said, very quietly, "Let the one who is without sin throw the first stone". And when they'd all taken themselves off - not surprisingly, it was the eldest who left first - he told the woman not to sin again.

But he didn't condemn her.

Presenter: And what would have happened to the man if she was caught in the act...

Luke: Nothing. That's what was so unjust about it. Men could play the field, but if the woman got caught she was put to death. Jesus loved women, he respected them, and he took terrible risks to improve their position in society. The idea that he was not the marrying

Continued on Page II

Philip Crowe is a former principal and tutor of Sarum and Wells Theological College.

The trouble is that, in remembrance of our Xhosa Victoria Regina, one has to add that the "Real World" approach might be too good to be true. It might not bring back the garden of Eden. It could be that the prevailing orthodoxy, which invokes the market at every opportunity, is the least worst option, just as democracy is the least desirable form of government until you consider all the others. We cannot be certain. We can only guess.

I suspect that the hard-world will prevail over the charities' aspirations for a while yet, and certainly past the millennium. Hard-worlders have a tough answer to every question. Crime? Lock them up. Poverty? A natural effect of economic dynamism. Global warming? The scientists are not sure. Tax? Confiscation. Jesus? Carbon-dating the closed tomb.

There must be a better way. We just need a prophet to tell us what to destroy in order to find it.

* Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN.



Joe Rogaly

We can profit from a prophet

Thoughts in memory of Nongqause, seer of the Xhosa tribe

Our prophetess spent time on Robben Island and, in some danger if she appeared in public after her return, adopted the name of Victoria Regina. It was fitting. We were taught at school that the military power of the Xhosa, which rivalled that of the Zulus, was broken.

As you will know, or may have guessed, Nongqause was wrong. The replacement stock she had said would trot in from the ocean shore did not appear. The sun did not rise blood-red. Dead chiefs did not walk again. It was a catastrophe. In the first half of 1837 some 70,000 of her tribespeople were thought to have perished of starvation, although some may have fled to where they could beg for food. The rest of her life was a sad anti-climax.

Ms Click went around telling everyone that on February 18 1837 the whites would be driven into the sea by a great wind. Other miracles would occur. Fields would spring up, ready to harvest. Illness and old age would disappear. In short, the world would start anew, to the great advantage of the Xhosas.

Just one little matter had to be cleared away. It was necessary

for her people to kill all the livestock they possessed. They should also destroy their grain and other fruits of the earth. She was believed. More than 300,000 head of cattle were razed. The Xhosas waited confidently for the payoff.

As you will know, or may have guessed, Nongqause was wrong. The replacement stock she had said would trot in from the ocean shore did not appear. The sun did not rise blood-red. Dead chiefs did not walk again. It was a catastrophe. In the first half of 1837 some 70,000 of her tribespeople were thought to have perished of starvation, although some may have fled to where they could beg for food. The rest of her life was a sad anti-climax.

No wonder some of us blather on about a sense of anxiety in the developed world. As to the cause of the angst - you name it, some successor to Nongqause has proposed it. The devaluation of

religious belief. The entry of women into the labour force. The birth control pill. The end of the traditional family. The loneliness of the solitary city-dweller. Multiculturalism, or its opposite, ethnic division. The erosion of trust. Technology. Science. The collapse of communism. The weakening of traditional values. The high cost of social security. Population growth. Humanity's steady, relentless, destruction of the planet.

In my trade I naturally receive missives on these and similar subjects every other day. A week or so ago I was at a conference organised by the Institute for Public Policy Research on the "risk society". Anthony Giddens said that in times past people worried

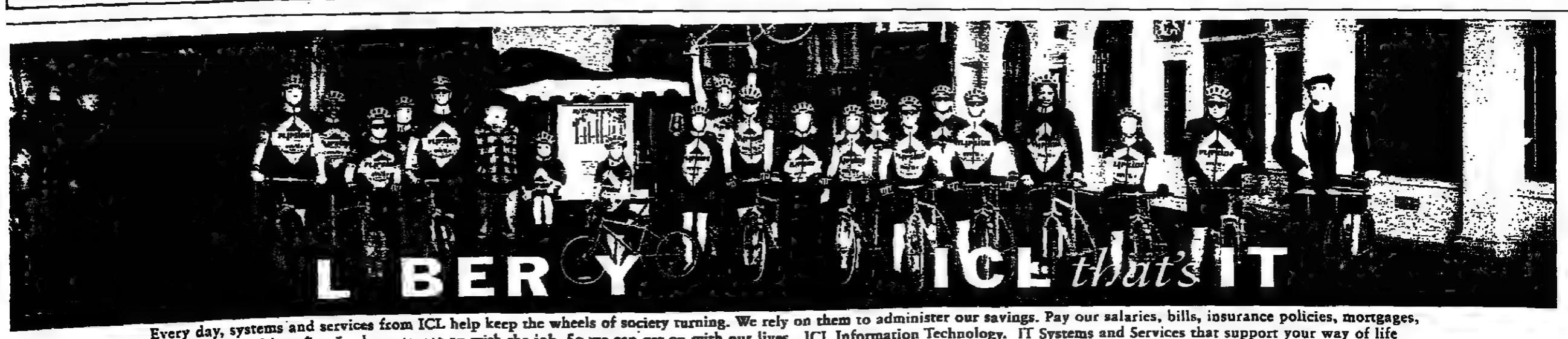
about what nature might do to them. Today we are concerned about what we might do to nature. Risks manufactured by new technology were experienced in most domains of human life. Science created uncertainty. The professor was brilliant.

This week I received a new book, *The Politics of the Real World*. It postulates, not for the first time, that there is a connection between global environmental degradation, the declining quality of life in Britain and increasing international insecurity. The connection is the assumption that economic growth, providing higher incomes, is the principal measure of progress and the main goal of political endeavour. Market forces pro-

vide the motive power.

The publishers launched the volume concurrently with the establishment of "Real World", described as a new movement by 33 charities and pressure groups, including respectable names like the Save the Children Fund, Oxfam and Friends of the Earth. Most of the book's chapters contain something to chew on.

To take one example close to my heart, Real Worlders want a "sustainable" economy. This might avert environmental disaster. There is a catch. Low growth, plus green policies would not guarantee annual increases in personal disposable income. The formula might, however, raise the quality of life.



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PERSPECTIVES

Space flight sounds like a good way to take the weight off your feet. Blasting off may be a bit nerve racking but once you get into space you are practically free from the effects of gravity. You weigh between one-hundredth and a millionth of what you do on the ground.

But microgravity has its down side. Gravity is extremely convenient. It makes tools drop vertically and then stay where they are when we let go of them. We come to rely on this. In microgravity anything that is not held down just floats away.

Even mundane tasks that we do not think about on earth can become difficult and messy in space. Gravity is the force that makes stuff go down the toilet.

Ever since America's first astronaut wet his pants, manned space flight has provided rich pickings for lavatory humorists and a challenge for sanitary engineers looking for a lightweight substitute for gravitational attraction.

One of the Apollo missions was hampered by a severe and literally uncontrollable bout of vomiting and diarrhoea suffered by an astronaut early in the mission.

Weightlessness has another drawback: it does not last forever. The body gets used to weighing nothing. The heart, circulation, fluid balance, muscles and bones all change in ways that make it difficult to cope with gravity on return.

Since the first space flight by the Russian Yuri Gagarin in 1961 scientists have been studying the way the body adapts to weightlessness. "Long-term adaptations are very important," says Thais Russomano

of King's College London. "A mission to Mars would be technically feasible if we could overcome the human factors."

Russomano, a Brazilian who has been excited by space flight since she was six years old, came to King's to study the way the heart and circulation adapt to weightlessness. "Adaptation of the cardiovascular system is really important because it occurs very rapidly so it can have a big effect even on very short missions," she says.

The main effect of weightlessness on the cardiovascular system is that fluid is no longer pulled towards the feet by gravity. Instead it migrates towards the head and chest, where it accumulates in the tissues, causing enlargement of the heart, swelling of the face and nasal congestion (this is why shuttle astronauts sound as if they have head colds).

The build-up of fluid in the upper body is counteracted by an increased output of urine, and a decreased fluid intake. The blood volume is reduced over three to five days.

Once this adaptation has taken place, when the astronaut returns to earth and gravity starts pulling the blood back towards the feet, there is not enough blood to maintain the circulation to the brain. Just standing up causes a racing pulse and may even make him or her faint.

It is not possible either to turn gravity off for any length of time on the earth's surface, or to turn it on in space. The longest period of microgravity that can be achieved without leaving the atmosphere is about 25 seconds, in an aircraft flying a parabolic loop so that the G forces of a vertical turn just counteract the earth's gravity.

According to Russomano, this is long enough to show how difficult emergency surgery is in microgravity (blood goes everywhere) but nothing like long enough to study cardiovascular adaptation. Fortunately the cardiovascular

When they were returned to a near-vertical position (70 degree tilt) and they performed a Valsalva manoeuvre - attempting to force air out of the lungs against a closed airway - most subjects either fainted or showed the initial signs of fainting, although none had done so before the six hours of simulated microgravity.

Russomano and her colleagues are now planning to test how simulated microgravity affects the mechanics of breathing and of blood gas transfer in the lungs.

But she leaves no doubt that, even with all its inconveniences, she would rather do her work under the real microgravity conditions of space flight. "At 33 I've probably missed my chance," she says regretfully, "but maybe if they paid more attention to the possibility of medical emergencies my MD might help me get selected."

■ The author is professor of psychology at the University of Nottingham.

The ups and downs of gravity

Scientists have been studying the way weightlessness affects astronauts. Andrew Derrington reports

When Lionel Crockett was in New Jersey on business a few years ago, the wife of his US sales agent, an arthritis sufferer, suggested he might design a range of gardening tools for people with weakened joints.

For four years he had concentrated on producing a range of scissors specially adapted for people with disabilities under the name Peta (Practical, ergonomic therapeutic aids). His self-opening scissors, with continuous long-loop plastic handles, had been selling in more than a dozen countries.

When Genny, his daughter, joined him in 1991 they decided to search for a new product and it was the American trip that provided the key. "Dad has always been an ideas man," said Genny, 30. "When he came back from America we discussed the garden tools plan and he started making samples."

Crockett started from the premise that the way in which most people usually hold a one-handed garden tool, like a trowel or small fork, puts undue strain on the wrist and hand. A better working position is with the handle at right angles to the blade and the hand gripping it like a pistol.

From this concept he developed five hand tools - a trowel, hand-held hoe, fork, weeder and cultivator. All have a handle rising vertically at right angles to the blade, and all are aimed at able-bodied gardeners as well as people with disabilities because they put less strain on joints.

The tools, all patented, were introduced last spring. This year they appear in the catalogue of a leading gardening mail order supply company. "We believe we have found a gap in the market waiting to be filled, especially as we have such a high proportion of elderly and infirm in the population," said Crockett, 65, who started designing when he owned and ran a Southend-based company producing components for the electronics industry.

When his partner became ill and had to retire in the mid-1980s Crockett gradually tired of running the business and eventually sold it in 1988. He immediately started designing again - this time working from home with Josephine, his wife - concentrating on the Peta range of scissors.

They bought standard scissors from Sheffield manufacturers and adapted them, using outworkers. Overseas sales, using agents, grew and in 1991 Crockett tempted Genny away from her job as assistant to the head of a large London management consultancy. She took over much of the day-to-day running of the business while her father concentrated on the design and development.

This enabled him to perfect long-handled toenail cutters, which rapidly became the best-selling line. The next stage was to move the business from the garage of the family home at Brentwood to the present headquarters - a converted equipment store on a farm near a village 7 miles from Chelmsford. They run it from there



Lionel Crockett and his daughter Genny with their ergonomically correct garden tools

Encounters / Kieran Cooke

World where fairy tales come true

Stacey is an unlikely sort of character to bump into in an art gallery, unless he happens to be dressed in a balaclava, sporting a screwdriver in one hand and a torch in the other. Yet there he was in Dublin, face like a spring plum, a suit which even a colour-blind bookmaker would be embarrassed to be seen in, one large hand resting on his chin as he peered studiously at a Triton.

"Some of this stuff is not half bad," says Stacey. A pixie of a woman in a large velvet hat purrs at his side. "She has education," he says. "She's opening my eyes. It's love I tell you."

He gives a bloodshot wink in the direction of the hat and leans earward. "And for good measure she has plenty of dash. Loaded with it" (eyes bulge, arms describe large amounts of currency). "Estates in the country, horses, a drive-way like the M26."

Stacey belongs to the old-fashioned section of the criminal class. The type of thief who appeared in the black and white films. A lovable scoundrel. "It's a fair cop guy," he would have said as the man from the yard laid a black gloved hand on his shoulder.

The last I had seen of Stacey was selling teddy bears and Christmas trees on a bright June day outside Hammersmith tube station in London a few years back.

Stacey had dropped out of sight owing to some compulsory time served at Her Majesty's pleasure. "Just a spot of porridge at the holiday camp," is how he cheerfully described it.

As we strolled from the Canaleto to the Murillo he told the tale of his latest contretemps with the law. The hat hugged Stacey's arm at the more touching moments of the story.

It started innocently enough. Through some computerised oversight in a particular branch of government Stacey suddenly found his account blessed with a bonus of £47,000.

After recovering from a near coronary Stacey pondered his options. "Now, of course, I could have rung up the boys at the department and pointed out the gross error that had been committed and ask them to please come and take their filthy pile of lucre back."

"Or I could just keep mum. Now you know me I don't like any fuss." (Shoulders are shrugged innocently, eyes go skyward while a heavily nictated finger is placed alongside nose.)

Stacey has always believed in the merits of education. The money came in handy to real

ise his ambitions for his son, Reginald. Armed with his computerised windfall, Stacey sent Reginald to one of England's top public schools.

The years go by. "Reginald is coming on nicely, talking pooh and doing well at his sums and the rest," says Stacey. "I had some bad luck on the horses. Then the school bills started mounting up. It was like pouring concrete down some great hole." (Stacey throws up his arms in horror. A Rodin sculpture has a lucky escape.)

"I begin to think it's better to just get Reggie some elocution lessons and use a handy little photocopier to forge a few 'O' and 'A' certificates. I go to the school principal and tell him how circumstances are getting a little difficult."

"Exactly what business might you be in, Mr Stacey?" he says to me over the sherry.

"Well," I said. "I'm in the

'I was nabbed with enough dodgy duvets round my neck to unfreeze the Alps'

wet fish and veg business myself."

Stacey describes how the principal picks an unseen speck of dust off his gown, then gazes for an extended period out of the stained glass study window, and says: "The only thing I can suggest is that you sell more fish Mr Stacey."

Stacey, shaken but unbowed, took another course. Just one more little job. In its essentials this involved the processing of a large quantity of duvets of dubious provenance.

A certain party reneged on the deal. "I was nabbed with enough dodgy duvets round my neck to unfreeze the Alps," says Stacey. "That and a few other things taken into consideration was enough to put me away for a tidy stretch."

We have stopped in front of a Gainsborough. The hat reads the explanatory notes.

In the world of Stacey, fairy tales come true. The hat, his solicitor's clerk, came to his rescue. "She stole my heart and opened her cheque book. Paid for my Reggie those last couple of years. Now he's thinking about working in a German bank. What a turn up."

The hat says it was all worth it. Stacey takes a critical look at the Gainsborough. He does not approve of the dogs. "Now me, I much prefer greyhounds."

Minding Your Own Business

A helping hand for troubled gardeners

Clive Fewins meets a family business which aids the disabled

with the help of four part-time women helpers, one home-worker and a shared telephone and fax line.

By 1993 - a year later - turnover had risen to £189,000 and business was brisk. However, the Crocketts soon found that what Lionel Crockett calls "a cheap and nasty copy" of the toenail cutter had found its way on to the market.

In spite of issuing writs and spending about £5,000 defending their product, the Crocketts decided against taking out a patent. The threat is now partly lifted, but the price of the product had to be cut in order to keep it in the cata-

logue of the leading mail order healthcare product suppliers in the UK.

Since the early 1990s all the scissor blades have been made either in Japan or Taiwan because the company could not find a British maker.

"I spent several days in Sheffield seeking a manufacturer, but no one seemed interested. I was very annoyed. I would far rather have Peta England than Peta Taiwan stamped on our products," says Crockett.

A crisis at the end of last year, when the woman who had been handling Crockett's accounts for 25 years died suddenly, meant a delay in com-

pleting the 1995 accounts. However, the signs are that last year will show a net profit of around 15 per cent on a turnover of £275,000 - a great improvement on the 3 to 5 per cent of the two previous years, says Crockett.

"During those years we had to invest very heavily in the development and patenting here and in the US on the new range of garden tools," he said. "However, we have not had to borrow - we do not even have an overdraft facility."

The new range of Peta Flat-Grip products is now complete, with the addition of an optional arm support - a rigid

cuff that encircles the forearm and fits into the rear of the handles on the hand tools. Also new is the pack of two clamp-on handles which can be attached at right angles to any normal long-handled tool to relieve stress on the wrist and hand.

The Crocketts have scaled up their mail order operation to handle these higher value products, which they are also selling through distributors in Australia, Germany, the US and Japan. In addition they have doubled their UK advertising budget to £5,000.

The metal parts of the garden tool range are made either

in Japan or Taiwan but the products are completed in this country, by the Essex company that makes and fixes the plastic pistol-grip handles.

"It is a neat solution because we do not want to get highly involved in production," says Crockett. "It leaves Genny free to run the company and means that I can spend most of my time at home and stick largely to what I enjoy most - designing new products. I have several ideas in the pipeline."

■ Peta (UK) Ltd, 2nd floor, Margaret Roding, Chelmsford, Essex, CM6 1QT. Tel: 01245-231811.

Gardening, Page 5

Continued from Page 1

sort, put about by one of your bishops...

Presenter: They're not my bishops...

Luke:...is just absurd.

Presenter: Now that you've mentioned the bishops, what do you think of today's Church?

All: Not a lot.

Matthew: No, that's not really fair. But I doubt whether Jesus ever intended to found the kind of institution the Church has become today, all that fancy dress, and end-

less meetings and so much time and money spent on its own life. It hides what matters.

Presenter: Which is?

Luke: The same as it's always been - love God and love your neighbour as yourself. That's it.

Matthew: You could put the same thing in a different way. It's to believe and trust in God. To worship and share in communion with other people, and to work for justice.

Presenter: Well, I'd like to come to the heart of Christian belief in God - the resurrection.

Matthew: The ending of your account puzzles me. You end with the women trembling and astonished at the resurrection, and your last word is a con-

junction. It's such a dreadful anti-climax. Fear and astonishment are an appropriate response to an event as shattering as the resurrection, which the other three leave out.

Matthew: That's just a way of saying that here is an act of God. I simply added a few more things that people wouldn't be able to explain, to emphasise that the resurrection was a supernatural act.

Presenter: So you'd agree with the former Bishop of Durham when he said that the resurrection didn't just mean that Jesus died, and was buried, and that the women went to the tomb and found that he wasn't there.

Matthew: Well, that's a marvellous phrase, what I suppose you'd call a soundbite. And it's true. The resurrection didn't just magically restore Jesus to the same state he'd been in before he died. He was utterly

changed, translated to a new kind of life. It is, in the literal sense of the word, a mystery.

Presenter: Then what do you make of the comment of the present Bishop of Durham, that if there had been a camera there at the time, it would have recorded that something happened, that the resurrection was photographic?

John: Frankly, I think that's just ridiculous. I don't think any of us has the first idea of what happened.

Matthew: And we've no idea of what happened to the body.

Presenter: So are you saying that belief no longer matters.

John: No, I'm not - but then,

to borrow a phrase, I would say that that wouldn't I. You seem to believe now that the only reality is that which you can understand and control - or that you will be able to understand and control. That distorts the truth about life. We did at least retain a sense of wonder, a sense of mystery wherever you have reduced life to technology.

Matthew: And once you lose a sense of mystery, or turn God into another control mechanism who can be manipulated if you say the right things, your sense of what is good and bad also begins to erode - so you have people arguing that Blair is as good as Beethoven.

Presenter: I've never sub-

scribed to that, indeed I've never seen that kind of cultural relativism.

John: And that's because art, music, literature, painting, even great television, invites wonder. It takes us out of ourselves into what is true and good and mysterious in life. The churches ought to do the same thing, but they have been afflicted, like everything else, by the same reductionist tendency - reducing God and language and goodness to what people can manage, and the resurrection to an event which could be photographed and published in the press and forgotten next day...

Presenter: Sorry to interrupt you in full flow, but we're out of time. No time even to mention the publications of my guests, but they are well known. Good morning.

دكتور من الأصل

PERSPECTIVES

Poncho politics in the Andes

Stephen Fidler goes on an eccentric tour with Alberto Fujimori, the popular and pragmatic president of Peru

President Alberto Fujimori flew in from Lima in his new jet and stepped down on the tarmac at Juliaca airport, high in the Peruvian Andes. As usual in the mountains, he was wearing a poncho and knitted hat, traditional Andean Indian garb.

This looks incongruous at first but after a while one gets used to it. Fujimori, after all, shares Asian ancestry with the people of Andes. His parents arrived as poor fishing people from Japan in the 1930s; millennia before, the Indians' forefathers crossed the Bering Straits from Asia.

A former university rector who emerged from nowhere to win the 1990 presidential elections, Fujimori subdued Peru's twin scourges of the 1980s: terrorism and inflation. It won him immense popularity and, after last April's elections, a second term in office until the year 2000.

He elicits powerful feelings. His critics, many among the intellectuals of Lima whose influence has waned since he took over, worry about the way he has concentrated power in his own hands. He is, says one, "isolated, opaque, erratic, excessively preoccupied with short-term popularity and intolerant."

An agricultural economist undergoing a very public divorce, Fujimori acknowledges no debt to any book, philosophy, historical figure or economic model. It is rule, he says, by pragmatism.

He also seems to be on a permanent election campaign. He travels ceaselessly, cutting ribbons, inaugurating schools, giving speeches and shaking hands.

Using his new Boeing 737-500 or military helicopters and transport aircraft, he travels as if he had an aversion to Lima and its Christmas cake presidential palace. It is, he says, part of his mission to solve Peru's problems.

People who know their way around Birmingham get to recognise small red trap doors on many of its bridges. These are an indication that the bridge passes over a canal; the red door is there to allow fishermen to pass their hoses through and pump up water.

There are a lot of red doors in Birmingham, because there are a lot of canals. The city owed much of its early industrial growth to its position at the junction of canals feeding in from all directions of the Midlands.

Today, that is a mixed legacy. Go to Digbeth, a short walk to the south-east of the city centre, and you will see the classic run-down urban canal scene. Dingy, decaying brick buildings lining the canal, rubbish in the canal and floating on the surface. Factories, alive and dead,

Peru has tens of thousands of problems but Fujimori has his note book. "We got this little book," he told us. "What do I see in it? I see they're putting corrugated iron roofs on schools in the highlands, when tile roofs are ideal. I've corrected this already. Every school in the highlands tile roofs."

We had asked the president for an interview and were invited on a trip to the Andes. Fujimori regularly takes foreign journalists on expeditions, but one has to be careful. One CNN reporter was embarrassed by her appearance dancing with the president on the evening news bulletins in Lima.

Fujimori sat in the front seat of a four-wheel drive, placing me and an FT colleague behind him and the driver. Further aft, suffering an acute lack of legroom, were Peru's minister of energy and mines and his technical chief. "My ministers take a back seat," laughed the president, whose autocratic style does not allow for rivals. We all laughed, including the minister.

In the next vehicle were the chicos, the female television interviewers who follow the president. Behind them were an assortment of television cameramen, officials, journalists and military men.

"What's the name of that restaurant I like here?" asked the president of his side-de-camp. Ten minutes later, 20 of us dropped in unannounced on El Trujillano, proprietor Ricardo Honores, generating 15 minutes of almost total chaos. Fujimori disappeared, eventually summoning the FT into the kitchen, where he was stirring pots and generously distributing advice about food preparation. "The president of the kitchen," he told us.

A night-time journey by road, from Juliaca to Puno, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, would have been too risky a few years ago. Now terrorism is under control, the 45-min-

EVERVILLU DEL PERU



My ministers take a back seat: Alberto Fujimori, accompanied on an election campaign in Peru

ute trip is once again possible.

The conversation on the way was a mixture of the banal and the extraordinary. We asked about how the government might deal with Peru's discredited judicial system, over which he caused an international outcry in 1992 when he shut it and the Congress down. He pondered before responding: "Close it."

We talked about the university in Puno, once a stronghold for the Shining Path terrorist movement, and which we were to visit the following day. "Everything at the university is fairly quiet now," ventured the driver. "Totally quiet," corrected the head of state.

We were heading for the Uros Islands, a group of man-made settlements floating on the lake. The fragile villages are built on reeds that are constantly sinking. Every week the villagers who eke a meagre living from fishing and tourism must harvest more reeds to keep the islands afloat.

The village was pitch black and asleep when the president of the republic and his entourage arrived.

With the rain still falling, we trooped soggy to our quarters, three straw huts with two beds and rudimentary bathrooms. Built for tourists, they were pledged by

Fujimori on one of his three previous visits to the Uros.

The president made certain he did not end up spending the night with his cabinet colleague. "The chicos come with me," he said presciently, disappearing into his hut with three television interviewers. I shared quarters with the minister and his aide, who generously insisted he sleep on a mattress on the floor.

We awoke two hours before the president. The minister kept returning to his bed for a nap, and jumping bolt upright and running outside when it seemed Fujimori might emerge. After breakfast, Fujimori presented the islanders with 42 solar panels, bringing electricity to the islands for the first time.

The president told the chicos - they were never called anything else - that he wanted to be interviewed about family planning. The big issue in Peru is privatisation but he told them: "I don't want to talk about privatisation till Friday."

The chicos always accompany the president on his travels, at home or on his 60 trips abroad. It is a grueling schedule, following the leader as he moves from rainforest, to coastal desert, to cold mountains.

Fujimori himself has grown accustomed to altitude, no longer needing the oxygen he used to take surreptitiously to sustain him. Some of the chicos suffer headaches and nausea.

They may receive a presidential call any time - one calls him "Prest". Their interviewing style is unaggressive, full of questions such as, "Mr President, what is your current message about family planning?". Their relationship is amusing to watch, though its effect is that Fujimori dominates the news broadcasts, and thereby virtually controls political debate.

In the hours that followed, Fujimori helped to row himself back to Puno, named a boat, spoke at the university, launched with local nota-

bles, and joined a troupe of street dancers, before inaugurating the airport terminal building. All the time he soaked up adulation, waving, shaking hands and plunging into crowds, a nightmare for his bodyguards. "We want to be ruled by Japanese," shouted one Aymara woman. Hundreds of people shouted "Chinito" - Little Chinaman - as we passed.

On all of this, Fujimori thrives. He seems to love these trappings of power, much as it is hard to see him voluntarily relinquishing them. Most Peruvians think he will change the constitution (for a second time) and run for a third term.

His critics fear he will go on until he fails and that, given his domination of the country, that will be bad news for Peru. Says political scientist, Francisco Sagasti: "Fujimori is tragic in the Greek sense of the word. The characteristics that make him successful conspire against him."

been taking place in nearby Coventry, where the canal basin close to the city centre was redeveloped last year for leisure and offices. The 5-mile link between the basin and the main canal network to the north is also being smartened up. "This was one of the worst areas in the city," says Duncan Sutherland, director of city centre development. "Now, we see the canal as the economic regenerator of the whole area."

These schemes are part of a wider programme at BW to use canals as the basis for urban revival. Bernard Henderson, the chairman of BW, says: "Canals are a vital element in the long-term sustainable regeneration of most of Britain's major cities and towns. BW's policy is to work in partnership with local authorities and the private sector to secure grants that will help fund projects to benefit local communities."

Life on the canal is looking up

David Lascelles discovers derelict areas of Birmingham city centre are being transformed

railway viaducts - it looks very depressing.

But look closer, and the history is still visible. A tall angular red brick building overlooking the canal junction has some fine period features: it is the old Proof House built to test ammunition two centuries ago. Nearby, a wide roof reaches out over the canal, supported by cast iron classical columns; the Warwick Bar where tolls were collected from passing canal traffic.

Further along, a large warehouse looms over the water. Peering inside, one sees that it has already been converted into modern offices.

Digbeth is an area earmarked by the city council

and British Waterways for revival. BW, a state-owned company which gets a £50m-a-year subsidy to run the country's canals, has already spent money to restore the bridges and towpaths. The next step will be to entice investment to restore the neighbourhood's heritage.

The possibilities awaiting Digbeth are visible in other parts of Birmingham where a variety of initiatives have transformed stretches of canal from industrial wastelands into areas where people are pleased to live and work.

To the east of Digbeth, another desolate area of canal was taken over by the city council's Heartlands

Development Corporation for new housing. What was once a slum area is now a cheerful-looking community of 1,000 houses clustered round the canal banks - Bordesley Village. A new bridge, modelled on the fine arching cast iron bridges of yore, connects the houses to a new shopping centre which is taking shape on the other side.

"The canal was a vital part of the concept," said Jim Beeston, chief executive of the corporation. "People want canalside sites." This advance from the days when canals were shunned as insalubrious has reopened opportunities to live near the city centre, something that has not

generally been possible since slum dwellers were moved out to suburban council estates.

To the north of Bordesley, the corporation is trying to redevelop the area round a picturesque set of locks and bridges at Aston. The atmosphere there is more industrial. British Gas has a large terminal with gas holders, and the locks themselves give it a businesslike air. But a hotel has already been built, and the corporation is trying to lure in industrial occupants. The beautification includes cladding a large modern concrete bridge in more appropriate red brick.

Stewart Stacey, chairman of

Birmingham's planning committee, describes the canals as "miles of opportunity". His showpiece is the area round the Gas Street Basin, once a derelict site at the heart of the city, now a striking redevelopment with a strong period atmosphere which has become a draw for the city and its visitors.

The canalside site includes Birmingham's new Symphony Hall and dozens of restaurants, shops and pubs. Across the canal, the Brindleyplace development will offer a National Sea Life Centre, alongside offices shops and housing.

In the surrounding stretches of canal, the old industrial

sites have been restored and reopened for leisure pursuits. Something of the atmosphere of the early canals has been recaptured, and the project won an important international award last year, competing with other large waterside redevelopments in places like Baltimore.

The key to generating the new investment was the work done by BW to dredge and clean the canals, which were thick with rubbish and contaminants, accumulated over two centuries. Once the water was cleaned up, it was stocked with fish. Suddenly people realised it could be a pleasant place to visit.

A similar regeneration has

been taking place in nearby Coventry, where the canal basin close to the city centre was redeveloped last year for leisure and offices. The 5-mile link between the basin and the main canal network to the north is also being smartened up. "This was one of the worst areas in the city," says Duncan Sutherland, director of city centre development. "Now, we see the canal as the economic regenerator of the whole area."

These schemes are part of a wider programme at BW to use canals as the basis for urban revival. Bernard Henderson, the chairman of BW, says:

from 1589 it is a question of piecing together bits and pieces from everywhere," McCurdy said.

"I call it a conjectural and not an authentic Globe. But the irony is that, being a few hundred yards from the original site it is probably in a better place."

One concession to modern fire and safety demands is that there will be two more oak staircases, unseen by the audience, each in a hidden corner of the theatre.

There is also a fire sprinkler system installed in the thatch. This was needed to obtain planning permission for the first thatched roof over a timber structure in London since the Great Fire of 1666.

"We feel matters of public safety are one of the legitimate areas of compromise," McCurdy said.

"After all, bearing in mind that building has been in progress on the theatre since 1993 and on the site for nine years, we do not want the reconstructed Globe to suffer the fate of the first one, when in 1613 a spark from a cannon during a performance of *Henry VIII* ignited the thatched roof and the whole building burned down."

■ *Shakespeare's Globe, Bear Garden, Southwark, London SE1 9EB*
Tel: 0171-620 0202.

■ McCurdy and Co, Manor Farm, Stamford Dingley, Reading Berks RG7 6LS. Tel: 01734-744866.

Shakespeare's giant jigsaw

The greatest challenges are still to come in reconstructing The Globe, says Clive Fewins

In a huge hangar at the former cruise missile base at Greenham Common, near Newbury, in Berkshire, carpenters are working on the last part of the giant wooden jigsaw that is the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe theatre on London's South Bank.

The size of the huge oak timbers needed for the tallest posts, the two exterior staircases, modelled on a former royal hunting lodge in Epping Forest, the timber house (backstage area) and the roof over this area and the stage presented a problem for master carpenter Peter McCurdy and his team.

They ran out of space at their workshop, a barn complex at Stanford Dingley near Reading, where the rest of the structure was created. The hangar, which used to house F11 fighter-bombers, is big enough to take two full-size reconstructed Globe theatres. Nevertheless it is almost full of fresh-sawn English oak for the remaining timberwork and flooring of the theatre, which will eventually have a capacity of 1,400 seated and standing.

Thousands of meticulously hand-cut joints will hold the structure together. "The vast majority of the estimated 2,000 joints are unique to one another," said McCurdy, 45. "Many of the joints are of the same type but, just like the original structure, every mortice is cut for its own tenon."

Achieving this has been very complex. Each of the huge "frames" of oak that form the 30-sided structure, Shakespeare's wooden O, is scribed, cut and refinished at the McCurdy workshops or the Greenham Common hangar. Then the individual frames are assembled to make sure everything fits together, disassembled and transported to the riverbank at Southwark.

This process has gone on since 1992, the year after McCurdy and company were appointed specialist builders of the main auditorium.

Gradually the three-tiered structure, with its jettied (overhanging) round oak galleries, has risen to form its now familiar thatch-capped profile on the South Bank, dwarfed by the neighbouring Bankside Power Station.

In August and September 1995, The Globe ran a workshop season. The first full-length production will run for three weeks starting in the last week of August this year.

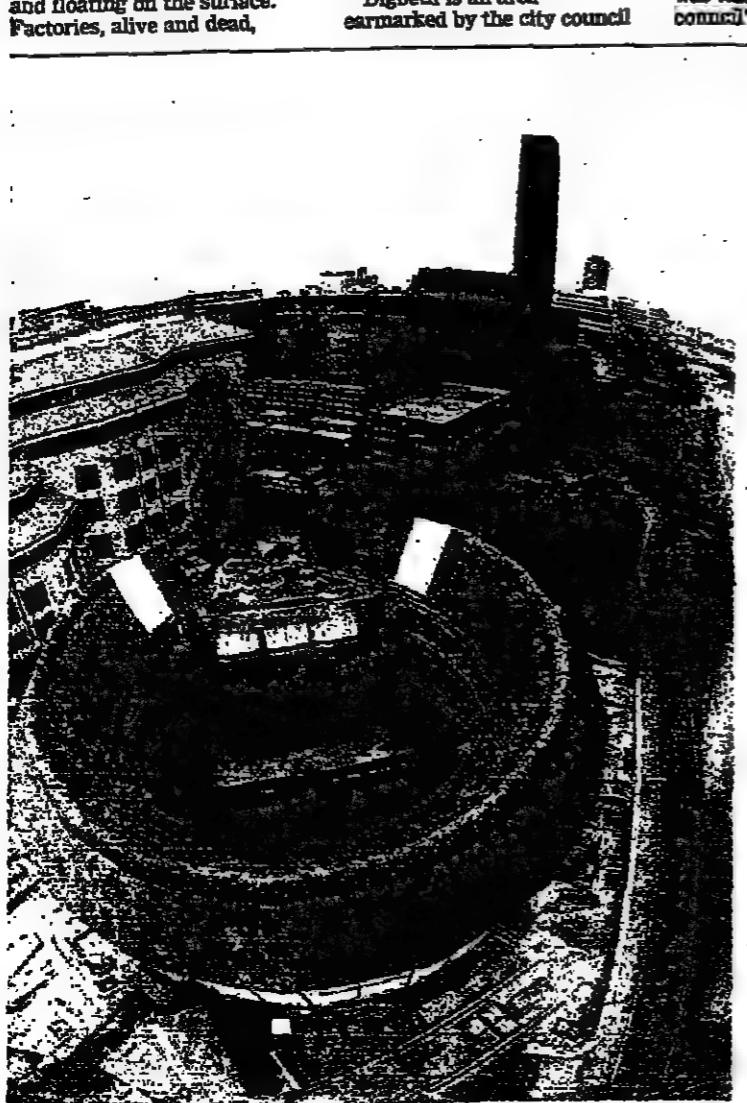
But for McCurdy the greatest challenge is still to come. While it was possible to build up a picture of what the main structure of the original Globe looked like from archaeology and contemporary reference, there is virtually no evidence to show what the stage structure and timberwork and flooring of the theatre, which will eventually have a capacity of 1,400 seated and standing.

Thousands of meticulously hand-cut joints will hold the structure together. "The vast majority of the estimated 2,000 joints are unique to one another," said McCurdy, 45.

"Many of the joints are of the same type but, just like the original structure, every mortice is cut for its own tenon."

It meant the pillars were too near the stage, restricting the actors' access

The actors' access to the stage. The timber house and structure above this and the stage had to be redesigned to allow for a 27ft 6in gap between the pillars. This in turn means a cantilever (overhang) of about 8ft on each side of the two huge oak columns that support the structure. An oak tree was found - part of a stand near Hereford planted after the Battle of Trafalgar - capable of producing a beam 44ft long and of sufficient girth to do the



Historical accuracy: The Globe on London's South Bank

FASHION



Black zip-up raincoat, £235, by Ramowear. This would make a good alternative to Prada's black nylon raincoat - versions are available everywhere from M & S to Benetton. High-tech fabric makes it strictly for modernists. From a selection at Joseph, 29 Sloane Street, London SW1. (Stockist inquiries: 0171-622 4774.)

Pink pearlescent PVC raincoat, £235 by Aquascutum, 100 Regent Street, London W1. (Stockist inquiries: 0800-282 9223.) This high-shine raincoat combines quality and function with a sharp injection of style. It is double-breasted and a good length, but it is cut a fraction on the big side so looks best cinched at the waist.

lettes and pockets kept to a minimum or, in some cases, dispensed with altogether.

So, how to go about choosing a raincoat? At present, there are two distinct shapes to choose between. The first is the cropped trench or flared A-line which can be worn either loose or cinched at the waist. This style works wonderfully with summer's narrow capri pants and short, straight skirts.

The newer shape is a neat, single-breasted, dustercoat style which is reminiscent of the 1960s. Cut straight and close to the body, it looks very chic in a Parisian way - it begs to be worn with a little bandanna at the neck, capri pants and bullet shoes. But some raincoats are cut so narrowly that they do not allow for extra layers underneath and, because the styling is ultra-simple, the fabric has to be of very good quality.

Whatever shape you choose, flared or straight, it is essential to check out the rear view as some raincoats can hang rather oddly at the back.

Those looking for something a bit different should head for Joseph and check out the fast-selling designs by Ramowear, a French label. Few will have heard of it, but this is definitely a name to watch. Fusing style with function, this maker offers a varied selection of good-looking raincoats. Much of the appeal lies in the superb quality of the high-tech fabrics and, although these coats average about £200, they are forward enough in fashion to survive several seasons.

The template for many of these raincoats is, of course, the ubiquitous black nylon Prada mac which was seized upon several years ago as a must-have item by the fashion

pack. This spring, Marks and Spencer and Benetton both have versions at affordable prices. Benetton has done it in khaki nylon as well.

The raincoats shown here have been chosen for their cut, styling and quality of fabric. While ideally a proper raincoat should be 100 per cent waterproof, with specially treated seams so that even the stitch holes do not let in water, several of the lightweight summer macs featured are fine in a shower but are not designed to withstand torrential downpours.

The high street is awash with fashionable coats. Favourites include Agnès B's lime green trenchcoat in pure silk; the white PVC belted mac (£79.99) by Oasis, which is short enough to double as a jacket and sure to be a hit with the trendy; and Ramowear's white, safari-style raincoat (£229) in a wonderfully tactile, high-tech fabric.

Impartial though it might seem, white is a fashionable choice for raincoats just now. It looks very modern over stark black but also works with this season's bright citrus colours.

One of the best-value versions of the narrow, dustercoat style comes from the Liberty own-label collection (£120) in navy satinised nylon. John Rocha offers a similarly simple style in waxed linen, while Racing Green has a lightweight, single-breasted cotton showercoat (£229) in admiral blue, bright red or stone.

Another good high street buy is Jigsaw's classic three-quarter length fly-fronted style (£135). In a peach-effect fabric, this features no unnecessary detail and has the added advantage that it is machine washable.

An April shower of revamped raincoats

Things have moved on from Prada's black nylon mac, says Karen Wheeler

Looking at the latest crop of high-tech, super-stylish raincoats, it is hard to believe that the bumble-bee mac once stood fast against the demands of fashion. It was required to be waterproof, windproof and practical - but fashion never entered the equation. How times change. Ever since designers such as Donna Karan decided to revamp the raincoat - even suggesting that it could be glamorous enough to be worn out at night - the stalwart of the British spring has become a hot fashion item. And where once the very word raincoat meant a classic beige trench (lasting a lifetime), now styles change like the weather.

Lime green, unlined A-line raincoat in treated nylon, £240, by Georges Rech, from 181-182 Sloane Street, London SW1. (Stockist inquiries: 0171-225 3343.) This looks very good on and hangs beautifully at the back. It comes in a great fabric (although the lime green might date) and has clear Perspex buttons. Optional belt.

Flame orange, cherry red and lime green. Aquascutum, meanwhile, has overhauled the image of both its Regent Street store in central London, with modern interior decor, and its range - with raincoats in pearlised and satin effect fabrics.

"We decided that colour, lighter fabrics and proportions were the key to a younger clientele," says Aquascutum chief executive James Pow. The average age of the Aquascutum customer has dropped from 50 to 38, 65 per cent of the range is now fashion-led, and sales have increased by 40 per cent. "The latest fabrics, particularly from Japan, are very scientific and can actually retain heat from the body during the day," says Pow. "Micro-fibres

have also moved on, with peach-skin fabrics becoming sharper and crispier."

The big thing this season, though, is the high-shine raincoat. Satin-effect nylons and plastic-treated cottons are two of the most popular materials, combined with simple, minimalist styling for a futuristic look. That means buttons, espe-



□ Far left: Yellow, single-breasted Bodmin cotton raincoat, £375, by Burberry. A fun raincoat which would brighten up the rainy day. Functional enough for long country walks, but worn over black it would also make quite a fashion statement in town. The Bodmin - a three-quarter length, fly-front raincoat with optional belt - is Burberry's best-selling raincoat.

□ Near left: Yellow, single-breasted Bodmin cotton raincoat, £375, by Burberry. A fun raincoat which would brighten up the rainy day. Functional enough for long country walks, but worn over black it would also make quite a fashion statement in town. The Bodmin - a three-quarter length, fly-front raincoat with optional belt - is Burberry's best-selling raincoat.

□ Near right: Gingham raincoat, £269, from Next Directory. (Customer Services: 0118-284 9494.) Smart and functional in its styling, this single-breasted, lightweight summer mac is very good value and one of the best high street buys. Not suitable for torrential downpours but a good option for wearing round town.

□ Far right: Navy blue short nylon trench coat, £235, by Margaret Howell, 29 Beauchamp Place, London SW1 (inquiries: 0171-584 2422). A very useful addition to an executive wardrobe and highly covetable, thanks to its lustrous, satin-feel fabric. Classic styling and colour makes this an investment with a shelf-life longer than one season.

HOW TO SPEND IT

Kids' clothes that adults like

Fond grandparents will queue up to spoil the younger generation with these goodies, says Lucia van der Post

When my children were small, clothing for kids tended to fall into two distinct categories: school shoes and uniforms, and dull but sensible sweaters and everyday clothes (bought largely from Peter Jones); and then there were party clothes.

It was party clothes that seemed to inspire British designers to amazing flights of fancy - immaculately smocked organza dresses, Little Lord Fauntleroy silk blouses and velvet knickerbockers, Liberty print summer dresses...

They were all beautifully made, rooted in tradition and hideously expensive, and based on the patently preposterous notion that all potential customers lived in palaces or ancestral manor houses.

When it came to sturdier clothing for every day the places to call on were few and far between.

These days all has changed. Temptation to spoil the small set is everywhere. It is now possible to buy enchanting clothes for children for day as well as party wear.

Quite apart from the arrival of Gap Kids and the enlargement of the Marks and Spencer range, there are now many smaller designers who sell their unique versions of childhood gear by mail. Many of them specialise in the childhood version of what might be called "special occasion" clothes - the sorts of things that grandmothers or godmothers fall for in a soppy moment that could be worn to a wedding or a birthday party - but a few offer their own more individual vision of clothing for everyday.

Tartine et Chocolat should perhaps be the doting grandmother's first port of call. In fact, Tartine et Chocolat's range is designed by a doting grandmother herself - Catherine Painvin, a French woman who has turned her collection of children's clothing and accessories into a business that



Striped T-shirts (£10-£12) and denim Bermudas (£16) from mini Boden

turns over more than £100m a year.

There is one shop in London - at 68 South Molton Street - but there is also a mail order catalogue (visit the shop or telephone 0171-629 7233 for a copy). Here are sweet-collared, puffed-sleeved dresses, candy-striped pinny dresses, gingham pinny dresses and strong striped rugby shirts. The clothing is available from the shop or by mail order (tel: 0171-629 7233).

Mouse Clothing is a small business specialising in hand-knitted sweaters, each of which is made to order. It has a small mail order leaflet with colour photographs of its suggested designs from which customers may choose colours, sizes and motifs.

dreamy white voile dress, which would be perfect bridesmaid wear, is £28, and an immaculate pale blue linen blazer for small boys is £28. But there are some more practical items as well - a gingham pinny dress and strong striped rugby shirts. The clothing is available from the shop or by mail order (tel: 0171-629 7233).

Mouse Clothing is a small business specialising in hand-knitted sweaters, each of which is made to order. It has a small mail order leaflet with colour photographs of its suggested designs from which customers may choose colours, sizes and motifs.



An enchanting floral dress, £12.99, from Adams' Childrenswear, 476-477 Oxford Street, London W1. For other stockists or inquiries tel: 0800-530040



Sweaters made to measure from Mouse Clothing

The designs are enchanting - creamy collared "Eton" sweaters, seed stitched navy wool jackets with brass buttons, indigo or stripey crew-necked sweaters. The sweaters are knitted by hand in England, Scotland or Ireland and are made from the best wools, so these are what could be called "special occasion" sweaters. Prices start from

£26.50. Brochure available from

Mouse Clothing, 51 Black Lion Lane, London W6 9BG. Tel: 0181-629 0888.

Fans of Johnny Boden's catalogue will be delighted to hear that there is now a mini Boden version that caters for children from birth until 8. Here there is lots of sturdy practical wear at reasonable prices - red striped pedal pushers at £12,

denim pinny dresses at £22, charming denim Bermudas at £15, sweet red-checked rompers at £20. It is a good catalogue to look for sturdy holidaywear (swimsuits and robes, T-shirts and shorts) as well as for the prettier dresses that every small girl needs to wear from time to time.

Particularly enchanting are the sailor dress, all crisp navy

and white (£24) and the smocked dresses (£44). Designs have been the responsibility of Kate Barton. She left a career at Vogue and Laura Ashley to found the General Clothing Company which became a leading supplier of children's clothing. A copy of the brochure can be had from Mini Boden, 4 Pembroke Buildings, Cumberland Park, London NW10 5RE. Tel: 0181-624 3662.

For those who still like to try before they buy, Adams' is a name to look out for. It has 317 childrenswear stores throughout Britain and delivers great design at great value - the fabrics may not be the finest but who cares when the prices are good and the clothes are soon outgrown?

thing of a compromise. However, it must be better than last year's non-shower and I may yet see Rodgerias thriving in what was once the dry shade of my sycamores. Precise irrigation has done a job which needs the closest consideration by fellow-gardeners in the home counties who are equally distressed by the turn in England's weather. Perhaps it will mark the garden's resurrection, under the zone-name of an ex-archbishop for its believing atheist's initials.

Precise irrigation has done a job which needs the closest consideration by fellow-gardeners in the home counties who are equally distressed by the turn in England's weather. Perhaps it will mark the garden's resurrection, under the zone-name of an ex-archbishop for its believing atheist's initials.

On sandy Cotswold soil, even

a Greek dripper-pipe is some

Gardening / Robin Lane Fox

Tory wets run riot in my dry zones

strates the ground. They run systems at the touch of a button which dampens the soil throughout the night and leaves you believing that a miracle has happened during the dark hours.

Until recently, the automatic watering of gardens in Britain has been confined to a few high-risk nurseries or even fewer millionaires.

Perhaps the climate is warming, although the one promising cloud on the horizon are predictions of a summer even hotter than 1986. Distressed by drought, I and my gardening brothers have independently fastened on Jeremy Browning of Precise Irrigation, a business which exhibits at a flower show.

Browning, 40, knows about dry weather. He began work as a tobacco farmer in Africa and took up the installation of artificial watering for agriculture. Since 1991, he has laid out schemes for Gulf Air in Bahrain and an Arab prince in Saudi Arabia. At last year's Hampton Court Show, the sun glared down unmercifully as Browning drew a diagram to illustrate the onion-shaped effect of water when spreading sideways. I recognised a fellow-madman with an interest in mother nature and, this week, he and the team have been setting up the vicarage garden to cope with the next round of drought.

There are three main systems on offer. If you have an adequate flow of water, you can run micro-sprinklers in your lawn, borders and in dry beds of a single backbone of hose. You can judge if the flow is sufficiently rapid by seeing how many litres you can run from a tap into a bucket in the course of a minute.

Any number over 22 will give you a chance of your own sprinkler system. Thames Water manages a pathetic minimum of nine to the taps of my vicarage, no doubt because their own leaking pipe has been losing most of the supply under the nearby graveyard.

Obviously, the price varies according to the amount of flower bed, but a startling figure of £3,000 is a realistic minimum for complete automation.

I certainly will not pay £3,000 or more for watering and, thanks to Thames Water's inability, I have only two options left: one is porous, or less dry, and the other is dripper-pipe, better known to Mediterranean farmers.

I have steered clear of dripper systems which have a simply named command system. I am advised that each zone of the garden should have its own code name. Giraffes have been suggested, but that depends if you have six of them whose names you want to contemplate in hot weather for the rest of your life. As a public-spirited fellow, I have opted for politics instead.

Leaky pipe is fashionable and it might seem as if your water authority has hundreds of miles of it, waiting for a new home. However, it has three disadvantages: it is more expensive than dripper pipe; the holes which leak down its length are easily choked up when you are gardening around them; and if the water authority ever improves its pressure, the pipe is likely to split.

After careful thought, Pre-

cise irrigation has directed me to dripper-pipe instead. Its black surface is broken up by dripper-fittings at every 30cm. It can be concealed by a light mulch and the hope is that the water will ooze sideways through the soil by capillary action. Less water is used, and on the expert projection, I would not be using more than £3 a week even if we ever come to be metered.

My 24 flower beds are now festooned with lengths of dripper-pipe, spaced 2ft apart. The beds resemble Barts Hospital in its heyday and are certainly no less crowded. The caring, however, is left to a central computer, programmed to set off each of the six zones in sequence as soon as the next drought begins.

The whole system is exciting and slightly alarming, but I recommend any keen gardener to take the plunge after the agonies of the past years.

My system is also a model of political correctness. The dripper pipe is made in Greece, which befit the first ancient Greek to own one in this country. My central European network of Greek drips is now zoned into areas of impeccable wetness.

Modern controls must have a simply named command system. I am advised that each zone of the garden should have its own code name. Giraffes have been suggested, but that depends if you have six of them whose names you want to contemplate in hot weather for the rest of your life. As a public-spirited fellow, I have opted for politics instead.

As the high priests of market forces seem increasingly dozy, I will show historians the way by naming my garden's zones after the most prominent, heroic Tory wets. They may feel that they fell victim to the force of the moment, but they are now supreme in four main sections of my garden: Pym for politics, Pym for

the herbaceous border. Prior for the shrubbery, Gilmour for the roses and Raison for the delphiniums.

When intervention is needed in the cause of justice and defence of the weak, I will press the zone which they code-name and have the double pleasure of putting the horticultural and political record to rights.

On sandy Cotswold soil, even

"Did you see how much Christie's got for that pink diamond ring at their last jewellery auction?"

"Amazing, wasn't it - just goes to show that one ought to be having a very sharp look through the jewellery box to see if there's something they could sell in their next sale."

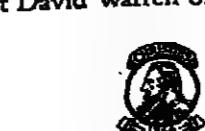
"I suppose more people have realised how much better it is to sell jewellery at auction; the more buyers there are the higher the prices go."

"Mum, I might take Aunt Maude's bow brooch in for them to have a look at."

"Why don't you? After all, it won't cost you anything, valuations are free after all."

Closing date for Christie's 19 June sale of important Jewellery is 20 April. Contact David Warren on (0171) 389 2380.

ABOVE: An antique diamond bow brooch.



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FOOD AND DRINK

Now where have we got to? Ah yes, Chardonnay, every wine drinker's familiar friend, and every winemaker's passport to international recognition.

As styles in the middle ground become increasingly sophisticated, and top white burgundies and their nearest rivals are ever more robustly priced, Chardonnay continues to claim new victims in the most unlikely places.

Nicolas Catena, who owns a significant proportion of Argentina's better winemaking capacity, has already shown that Argentina can produce unexpectedly fine Chardonnay for such a hot climate. He had the bright idea of hiring California winemaker Paul Hobbs.

The new, 1994 vintage from Catena's Agrelo vineyard reaches new heights. The British importer, Bibendum of London NW1, sells it at £9, although Fullers wine shop sell it for £7.99 and The Wine Society of Stevenage list it at £8. Hobbs' less concentrated Alamos Ridge Chardonnay at £5 from all three stockists is also extremely respectable for the money.

Now the chains and supermarket

kets are muscling in on Argentine Chardonnay, most remarkably in the form of Santa Julia Chardonnay 1993 at £3.99 from Waitrose. Acids are kept high in a wine made from pergola-trained grapes grown in a virtual desert, but the result is far from vapid. This is a lively, full-bodied, very slightly salty, prickly wine that is amazing for its provenance.

A much more familiar style of Chardonnay comes an hour's flight away across the Andes in Chile. It is heartening to see the vast North American spirits conglomerate Seagram take the trouble to import Casa Porta Chardonnay 1994 Cachapoal, from one of Chile's newish small estates operating outside the clutches of the handful of dominant wine companies.

At £4.99 from Oddbins (another

Seagram benevolence) this well-balanced wine has been given polish thanks to the small proportion that was fermented in small oak barrels and aged on the resulting lees. Barrel fermentation and lees stirring is what every winemaker tries to persuade his accountant that his Chardonnay needs nowadays. Fermenting white grapes, particularly Chardonnay, in small barrels produces a pale, complex-flavoured, and particularly smoothly textured wine.

The process of fermenting fairly rough and ready grape juice in a new oak barrel encourages all the potentially rousing elements (and many pigments) in a wine to drop out of it, while prolonged contact with yeast and lees tends to form fuller, livelier, more persistent flavours. And keeping any wine in a

barrel for a time encourages the most natural sort of aeration and clarification possible.

Penfolds Organic Chardonnay/Sauvignon Blanc is a good example - a lovely dense-flavoured wine, presumably thanks to its pure viticultural milieu in Clare Valley, sans agrochemicals, but with a beautiful delicacy thanks to its fermentation in new French and American oak barrels.

The 1993 is £6.49 at Victoria Wine Cellars while most of the likes of Davisons, Majestic, Safeway and Somerfield have moved on to the 1994 or even the 1995 at £6.99. Incidentally, from the 1994 vintage, when John Gummer was still feeding his daughter beefburgers, this wine has been vegan.

But new barrels add an absolute minimum of a pound a bottle to

production costs. Hence the increasing importance of the oak chip, small fragments of oak suspended, teabag style in tanks to infuse wines with an oaky flavour.

Oceans of less expensive Australian whites bear the slightly sweet, toasty, dusty hallmarks of an encounter with *Quercus fragrans*. Some of the cheaper "oaked" Spanish wines of both colours positively reek of vanilla thanks to over-chipping. But chipped wines can turn into oily or bitter wines.

One increasingly popular way of splitting the difference between a quick but all-too-short-lived oaky fix and prolonged natural barrel maturation is planking, literally suspending planks of well-seasoned oak in the wine.

One very convincing example, carefully described as having been

"aged with new French oak", is Cordillera Estate Casablanca Chardonnay 1993 at just £4.49 from Greenalls' Wine Cellar/Berkeley Wines, Great Northern Wines of Leeds, Côte d'Or Wines of Ealing, Great Western Wines of Bath, and Davys wine bars in London. Made by Thierry Villard at Santa Eulalia in Chile, it has textbook flavours of French oak and less cloying. What it lacks is that lovely delicate texture associated with barrel fermentation - the hallmark of fine white burgundy.

Thresher/Wine Rack/Bottoms Up has a parcel of Chablis Vieilles Vignes 1991 at £9.99. Remember real Chablis? Try this intriguingly meaty, leesy example. Daniel Defaix is a fine producer and just the sort we would like to see more of in our chains, please.

Cave Cru Classé of London SE1 (0171-378 8579) has Jean-Paul Drom's dense, youthful and convincing Grand Cru Chablis Les Clos 1991 at £165 a dozen (plus £13 duty and VAT) which may well outlast Colin Deleger's sinewy Chassagne-Montrachet Chenevottes 1993 at £195.

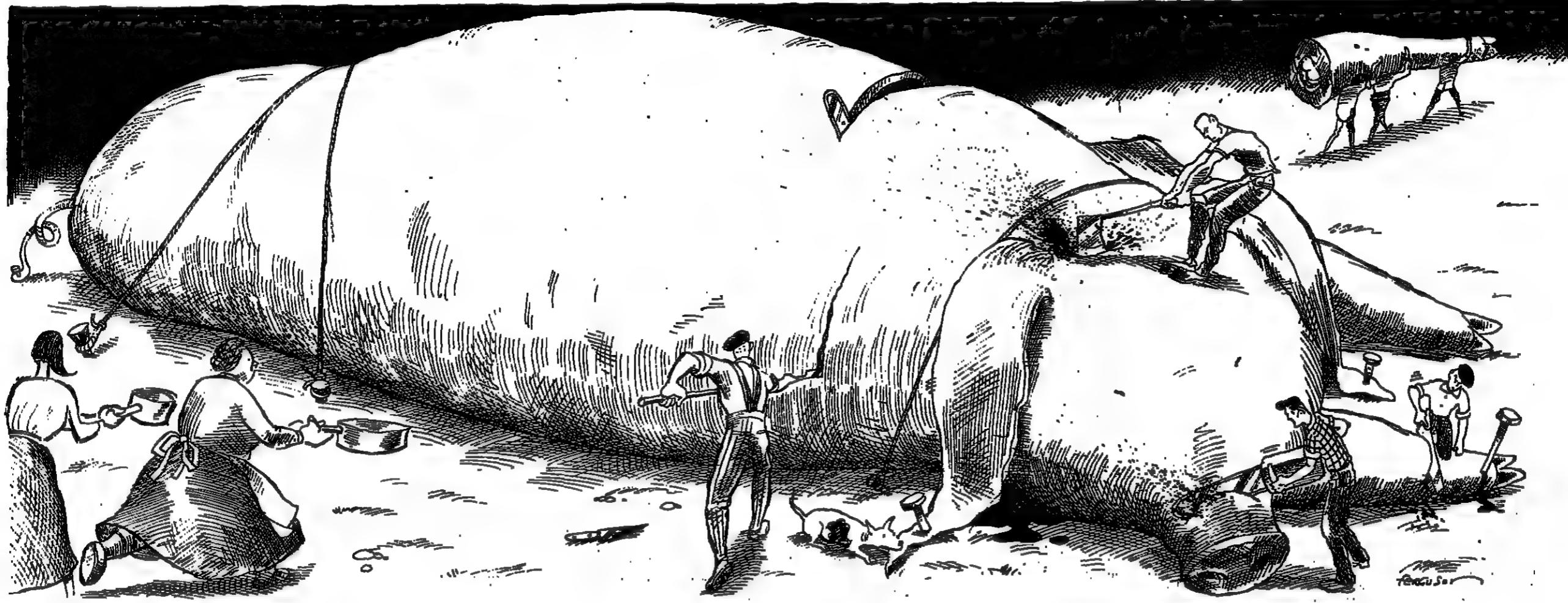
For oaky, smoky, lemony white burgundy that should develop well but also give current pleasure, Amiot Bonfils' Chassagne-Montrachet Caillerets 1993 is £38 from Cave Cru Classé.

Finally, a Chardonnay that has no need to speak its grape name for its place name is apparently worth £2,353 for six bottles, or £393.11 a bottle: Le Montrachet 1993 from the Domaine de la Romanée Conti via UK agents Corney & Barrow of London EC1, who ominously describe 1993 burgundy as "a collectors' vintage".

Total production of DRC Montrachet available to the world's most priggish wine collectors was fewer than 300 cases, so Corney has been allocating rather than selling their share. The 1978 went for more than £500 a bottle at Christie's recently.

Chips, planks and new barrels

Jancis Robinson on the latest ways of making Chardonnay even more glamorous



Forget Babe: just think about the sausages

Giles MacDonogh goes to watch the killing of his pig in southern France - a salutary reminder of the hard realities of animal slaughter

What follows is not for the squeamish. About a year ago, I conducted a small business transaction in the unlikely setting of Angelina's tearooms in the rue du Rivoli in Paris.

Over one of their famous *mont blancs*, I wrote out a cheque for a sum sufficient to purchase, rear and fatten a pig until such time as it was deemed ready for slaughter. The pig was to be kept somewhere near its mistress's house in the department of Lot et Garonne in Gascony.

For a townie like me, it is not an easy thing to kill any animal, let alone a large one like a pig. Pigs look appallingly human. Much of the time, they are far more familiar than monkeys. Just think back to the last time you took a suburban train, or the London Underground.

For a long time now, I have suspected that Darwin might well have been barking up the wrong tree, and my theory seems all the more feasible with the increasing use of pig organs in spare-part surgery.

Yet, I felt I was justified in two ways: historically and ethically. In cooler climates and in mountainous regions, at least, man has been killing swine for food since the beginning of civilisation.

The slaughter of the fattened pig at the end of winter was a moment of joy to be shared by the entire village. In some countries, the party has a special name - the *matanza* in Spain and the *Schlachfest* in Germany.

Then there is all the present about meat and meat-eating which, I am certain, is a reflection of our divorce from the land and our inability to grasp the needs and traditions of simple country folk. Used to buying our food in sterile plastic trays and pots we can no longer cope with the hard realities of animal slaughter. In extreme cases we try to have it banished.

All the more reason then, I thought, to experience the process at first hand. I was in France for a fortnight around the time of the new moon when the sow (who have sweater meat than boar pigs) could be relied upon to be off heat. A Saturday was therefore chosen for its dispatch.

Killings for family use is still tolerated in France, although the practice has died out in many regions. In the Gironne Valley the older men in the villages still kill pigs during the winter months.

In some parts of Burgundy, I was told, the spectator sport where people pay to be in at the kill and they allow the ani-

mal to bleed to death in the presumably bogus justification that it makes the flesh taste better.

I was personally grateful for the fact that neither Jean-B nor Virginio, the two killers, thought that was the case. I went to see the beast in its sty. It was squatting on its haunches. It stared at me with what seemed to be a mixture of malevolence and distrust. Jean-B dismissed the idea, however, that the animal knew what was in store.

Another man was strutting round the farmyard. In what seemed to be a gesture in keeping with the mood of the morning, he picked up a scrawny chicken and broke its neck. He needed one for lunch, he said.

A big cauldron was boiling in the barn. He dipped the lifeless bird into the tub and carried on his conversation while he plucked out the feathers. An ancient dog limped by on three legs. He expressed the opinion that it was about time that it, too, should go the same way.

Jean-B went into the sty and managed to attach a rope to one of the pig's hind legs. We were told to keep back, as the pig might have panicked if it had seen strangers at this point.

We followed the animal into the barn where a table had been set up with knives and a plastic tub had been brought in and stationed under the system of pulleys which were to be the pig's gibbet.

Jean-B and Virginio held the pig while Jean-B fetched a crowbar. With the revolting crunching thud he brought it down on



at this point it almost broke loose and both men had to hold it fast to prevent it from escaping.

Virginio held on to the ropes while Jean-B fetched a crowbar. With the revolting crunching thud he brought it down on

the beast's head. In a few seconds the animal was strung up on the gibbet and both Virginio and the pig's mistress had taken hold of its head to allow Jean-B to slit the jugular. A torrent of blood gushed into the bucket.

The pig was now dead. The process had taken a minute at the most and the animal was cut cold when the fatal incision was made. The pig bucked once or twice and there was a soft groan as the air came out of its lungs. These, I were told,

were only muscular contractions. The pig was taken down and placed in its wooden bath or *mat*. Resin was strewn over its skin and then boiling water. Now all three proceeded to the *dernière toilette du cochon*.

The bristles were shaved from its back and belly while a blow-torch removed those from its snout and trotters. Once again it looked horribly human: like a fat baby in a bath.

Incisions to take the bar were made in the hind trotters and the pig was strung up for a second time. It was the moment to gut the animal. The pig's mistress did the honours. Once it was open it looked more familiar, like a carcass in a butcher's shop rather than the living beast of a moment before.

As we had bought casings for the sausages, the womb and intestines could be thrown to the waiting dogs, already in a frenzy of excitement. Even the tripod-bitch joined in, growling furiously over her corner of the tripe.

From the inside of the ribcage Jean-B cut *grillades* for our lunch, little bits of fillet, he assured us, which the butchers never sold. Liver, kidneys, heart and lungs were put aside and the head was cut off. The carcass was then pulled up out of the reach of the dogs and we went back to the house to deal with the black puddings.

A bowl of shallots and garlic cloves was put out for me to peel while the liver, heart and lungs was mixed with the blood for the black puddings. Up until now I had felt only a slight revulsion at the sickening thud which had knocked me over.

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FOOD AND DRINK

Cookery / Philippa Davenport

Pasta fit for clerics

Men of the cloth, I have noticed, tend to be good eaters and drinkers. I do not mean good as in careful about cholesterol levels and vitamin intake. I mean, not to put too fine a point on it, that many are greedy.

Appetite-whetting food writings flow from the pens of Anglican clerics – think of the Rev Sidney Smith and Parson Woodforde. Roman Catholic priests are more likely to concentrate wholeheartedly on tucking in; no time for diaries and essays.

Perhaps it is because the Pope denies them the pleasureable distractions of wives that, more than other denominations, they need to seek solace in the temptations of kitchen and cellar.

Some of the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic members of fine claret that I have met are Jesuits and Benedictines. I know at least one parish priest who believes he could out-work Ken Horn if allowed to take his place as television chef.

And I have dined with another fiber of men who is almost as dab-handed with dabs and other fruits of the sea as Rick Stein, chef-proprietor of The Seafood Restaurant, in Padstow, Cornwall, and author of *Taste of the Sea*, winner of this year's André Simon award.



Clerics who aspire to, but have not yet succeeded in, creating culinary triumphs are catered for by Darina Allen, the Irish food writer and owner of Ballymaloe Cookery School in County Cork.

A few years ago she ran a short course specifically designed for would-be self-catering parish priests. So popular was it that it has become an annual event.

Priests whose interests focus decidedly in favour of eating, rather than cooking up minor miracles with leaves and fishes, continue to cultivate good cooks in their parishes and they perpetuate the custom of making house visits close to mealtimes in the hope of being invited to share in the repast.

In the great gastronomic province of Emilia-Romagna, this custom has presumably been taken to extremes for it is said that the parish priests there are finely attuned to the sounds and smells of the preparation and cooking of their favourite dishes.

Like moths to a flame, they are instinctively drawn to any house where and when these delicacies are on the menu. Indeed, certain pasta dishes in both Emilia-Romagna and the neighbouring province of Marche are known locally by such names as *strangolapreti* and *strozzapreti*, meaning priest-chokers, because those who stuff them into their mouths furiously sometimes splutter and fight for breath in the process.

Spinoli of Marche, pasta makers of distinction, spent 2½ years perfecting *strozzapreti* for their range. Early attempts

were apparently a little too heavy, the finish was a mite too shiny so sauces slid rather than clung as well as they might.

The product that finally went on sale is exquisite, boasting all the usual Spiniotti quality hallmarks (rich egg flavour, bouncy texture, full-mouth feel and capable of holding cooking point well) as well as witty and joyfully exuberant shape. It seems appropriate to team this pasta with cephalopods, and I have done so twice over.

PASTA AND PESTO SQUID

(serves 4)

Seafood and pasta play equal roles in this recipe but the squid could be reduced to saucing status by increasing the quantity of pasta used by at least half as much again.

200g strozzapreti pasta shapes; 400g small squid; 100g 150g spring cabbage, preferably Primo 1 to 2 tablespoons virgin olive oil; about 6 tablespoons pesto Genovese.

Clean the squid, slice the bodies into thin rings and leave the tentacles in bunches or cut them in half depending on size.

Wash and shred the cabbage into fine ribbons. Cook the pasta in plenty of fast-boiling salted water. Steam the cabbage or add it to the pasta pan for the last minute of cooking.

Sauté the squid for one, maximum two minutes in hot olive oil. Toss in the pesto to arrest cooking and mix quickly with the cooked and drained pasta and brassica. Season to taste and serve without delay.

STRANGELIST SQUID WITH TOMATO, CHILLI AND LIME

(serves 4)

Like the previous recipe, this is not a pasta dish in the usual sense. It is a gourmande fishy *salade* Hôte. Up-tight or mild depending on the amount of chilli used. The squid can be cleaned and chopped and the dressing can be prepared several hours ahead, leaving only the swift simple tasks of boiling the pasta and sautéing the squid to be done just before serving.

200g strozzapreti; 300g small squid; 200g ripe, meaty tomatoes (I would use plum tomatoes in summer). Canaries are the best but now; one garlic clove, one, two or three tiny pointy red Thai-type chillies; one lime; a little each sesame oil and virgin olive oil.

Skin the tomatoes and cut in half. If using a non-plum variety with a high liquid content, squeeze out and reserve some of the juice or the dressing may be too sloppy. Dice the rest and put it into a shallow serving bowl. De-seed the chillies, chop them finely and add to the tomatoes together with the garlic crushed with sea salt, one tablespoon sesame oil, the finely grated zest of lime and freshly squeezed lime juice to taste.

Clean and chop the squid as described in the previous recipe. Just before serving, cook the pasta in plenty of boiling salted water and drain well. When the pasta is nearly cooked, sauté the squid for one, maximum two minutes in very hot olive oil.

Quickly add both ingredients to the dressing. Toss to mix well, check seasoning and thin with the reserved tomato, olive oil, pulses, honey, fruit, aromatic seeds and fresh herbs since Homer's time.

This world has been familiar in language and literature, but the gastronomy of the ancients has made its way on to our tables only recently. Now we can compare our supper with Plato's, this simple, flavoursome diet rich in vegetables seems more familiar than the food of our grandparents.

Dalby, a classicist, has done



The real thing: sweet rice cooked in bamboo in a Thai Market – but London is catching up on the Thai taste stakes

The sweet smell of Bangkok

Nicholas Lander visits Talad Thai – a supermarket, restaurant, take-away and cookery school all in one

Wednesday afternoons in Putney, south-west London, will never be the same. Although standing outside in the rain and biting wind, there was a sense of warmth, almost heat, coming from 66 polystyrene boxes piled on the wet pavement outside Talad Thai, which is incongruously situated in a row of shops alongside Air Maita, a pharmacy and a deserted dry cleaner's.

The boxes had been packed 24 hours previously at Bangkok airport. Now wrapping was being torn away to reveal more than half a ton of the freshest Thai fruit, vegetables, herbs, spices and flowers.

There were bags of lemon grass, kaffir lime leaves, Thai shallots, galangal, red, green and – hottest of them all – very sweet – fruit.

These boxes constitute the weekly shopping list of husband and wife, Piai and Prane, who opened Talad Thai five years ago. They hoped, because of the shop's proximity to the Thai temple, they would at least be assured of a good Sunday trade.

If it were in London's West End, Talad Thai would be labelled a gastronomie: there is a supermarket, a string of basic, unadorned restaurant tables that allow an uninterrupted view into the kitchen where, behind five woks, stand two Thai chefs who fulfil Talad Thai's three other functions – cafe, take-away and, on Sunday mornings, a Thai cooking school.

I ate a delicious, inexpensive lunch. My favourite Thai soup, *kaeng som kha* – pieces of chicken in creamy coconut milk with lemon grass, galan-

gal, kaffir lime leaves and chillies – was served, followed by *goong hon pha*, four prawns, wrapped in rice pancakes and deep fried. Then came *kaeng boi toey*, chicken pieces wrapped in pandanus leaves and *kaeng new pad thai*, stir-fried noodles with prawns, tamarind sauce, roasted peanuts and salted turnips. With a Thai beer, the meal came to £18 for two.

As we were finishing, Piai joined us to talk about his food. He said: "When we started in 1990 it was very difficult because of the recession and because we are just a bit too far from the High Street. But our wholesale business has grown because today there are several hundred Thai restaurants in London.

"The big problem is the

fragile nature of all that we import. It is very hot in Bangkok at the moment and at least 10

per cent of what we fly in is unsaleable by the time it arrives. The only thing we can do with the coriander if it has turned brown, is throw it out. It can be even worse if water gets inside the boxes or they are stacked too close to the engines.

Such interest is prompting Piai and Prane to consider extending their business into what was the dry cleaner's next door. If they do, and Talad Thai loses a little of its Aladdin's Cave nature, a trip to Putney will handsomely repay any food lover's train fare. As I was leaving, I watched a beautiful food ritual as Prane

opened a box of young mangoes, each wrapped in a sheet of Thai newspaper, and laid them lovingly on a large dish covered in banana leaves.

Talad Thai, 329 Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London SW13 6TL. Tel: 0181-789 3034. Fax 0181-789 3861. Open Monday 9am-11pm; Sundays and bank holidays 10am-8pm.

■ Bruce Cost Foods from the Far East (£15.99, 250 pages, Random House, UK, or Morrow USA).

Now Allans' van calls in Putney every Thursday morning

Book Review / Lesley Chamberlain

Food of the gods remembered

That the Greeks knew how to live was a scholarly 18th century German dream apparently founded in reality.

Andrew Dalby's carefully documented account suggests the Ancient Greeks largely ate the Mediterranean food we covet today.

Dog-eating lingered until the 2nd century BC, and odd superstitions practices still occurred, but the Greeks have evidently been enjoying wine, cheese, olive oil, pulses, honey, fruit, aromatic seeds and fresh herbs since Homer's time.

This world has been familiar in language and literature, but the gastronomy of the ancients has made its way on to our tables only recently. Now we can compare our supper with Plato's, this simple, flavoursome diet rich in vegetables seems more familiar than the food of our grandparents.

Dalby, a classicist, has done

us a service in setting out the genealogy of the Greek table.

The archaic Greeks ate simply off local produce, and their diet hardly contained meat. This changed with the evolution of Greek trade. By the Classical period, culinary imports from around the Mediterranean were sought after. The Athenians, a business people with money, quickly acquired a gastronomy which Archestratus wrote down.

The newly codified art prised, among other delicacies, fish. The tuna, red and grey mullet, octopus and many other varieties of fish and seafood which characterise Greek cuisine always seem to have been as special, and sometimes as expensive, as they are today.

Ancient Greek dishes were pungent with fresh herbs and seeds, like fennel, poppy seed, sesame, cumin, coriander, thyme, dill and basil. Another source of piquancy was garos, reminiscent of south-east Asian fish sauce, but first

made in Europe by the Black Sea Greeks.

Syphium, which has since died out (the last stem given to Nero), did important work as a forerunner of garlic. Imported from Greek colonies in North Africa, it was grated over everything savoury.

A wealthy man employed his own Sicilian cook. He also enjoyed white bread. Bread was a telling social and economic indicator in a country where wheat hardly flourished. Yet it seems imported wheat was not worth the outlay.

Many people, not just the less well off, ate barley. Unlike the Romans, they enjoyed barley as their staple. The real poor ate from the hedgerows.

In this society, there were communal meals in the town hall, and private meals at home. A hired man took care of the sacrifice before the men of the family came to eat, followed by the women. Apparently any meat aroma would placate the gods. The ancient Greeks rarely ate beef or veal. They chose a variety of birds, fowl, and, for real

flavour, wild ass or hare.

Those semi-public occasions called symposia were male orgies which began after the main eating finished. Or sometimes the *hetairai*, the mistress class, hosted them. Along with wine and nuts for dessert came flute girls, erotic dancers, acrobats and the possibility of uninhibited sex with not-one's-wife.

Plato describes in his *Symposium* how Socrates called for the flute girls to go and play elsewhere while the men talked about the nature of love.

But even serious-minded symposiasts got drunk and played the wine-chucking game *kottabos*. Plato tells us the beautiful Alciprades, loved by Socrates, turned up the worse for wear after a symposium-crawl.

Greek spicy wine, though taken watered, was sweet and fortified, like raisins with sugar and a kick, so it is no wonder that they got drunk. Its potency did not frighten the married women, who had a reputation for drinking it all night, neat, in her own quarters.

In short, everyone in Athens was overdoing it and Plato, who thought it too expensive to eat two meals a day and never sleep alone at night, observed that Spartans had more self-discipline. But, as Dalby observes, the Spartans had no money.

No review can do justice to the packed detail in this unique book, drawing on the archaeology of prehistoric sites, the inventories of shipwrecked cargoes, ruined storerooms, vase-painting and literature.

It is a fascinating dip and I would have reckoned it a grand dinner had it been a little more digestively presented, and with more spice from the philosophers.

■ Lesley Chamberlain's *Festive Food of the Gods* is published on April 11 by Kyle Cathie (£4.99, 60 pages).

Hunting for Perfection

A black and white illustration of a man in a suit and hat, holding a rifle, looking at a bottle of beer. A speech bubble from the bottle says "Ah-ha!"

A black and white illustration of a bottle of beer with a label that says "OLD SPECKLED HEN".

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TRAVEL

An island refuge for eccentric millionaires

Paul Betts savours the expensive simplicity of a Caribbean resort where less has always been seen as more

Father Jack White, in dog collar and black slacks, stepped out of his Japanese jeep, picked up a battered old suitcase, and headed towards Pusser's bar.

"Good morning," he greeted the early risers in a strong Irish accent. They had gathered in the pub overlooking the boats and three pelicans nosediving in the clear blue Caribbean waters of Leverick Bay on Virgin Gorda. At the end of the jetty, a red telephone box under a Shell Oil sign reminded them they were in a British dependent territory.

"It's a special day, isn't it?" the old priest said. "It's the feast of the National Apostle," he added, for those who might have forgotten it was St Patrick's Day.

Every Sunday morning at eight, Father White celebrates mass in Pusser's bar, a trendy hangout for yachting types in the British Virgin Islands. "But please don't tell all your friends I say mass in the bar. The bishop would be very angry. Tell them I celebrate it around the bar," he said with a big grin as he opened his suitcase, screwed together the three parts of his portable chalice and placed a white linen cloth on the bar between the beer pumps and the cash register.

In place of candlesticks stood two wooden statues of naked females holding globe-shaped lights on either side of the makeshift altar. Empty bottles from the night before were strewn on the tables, along with the dregs of the local rum cocktail known as "Pusser's pain-killer". St Patrick would approve.

I had been persuaded to attend Father White's early morning service by Peter Shandlin, the manager of Little Dix Bay, the resort built by Laurence Rockefeller on the southern end of Virgin Gorda. "Living here is like being in a Broadway show," he said. "It's a crazy kind of place."

Eccentricity is the hallmark of this Caribbean hideaway; it always seems to have attracted the more original sort of millionaire. The first to come was Rockefeller. With his Little Dix resort he set the trend. 30 years ago, for what can best be described as luxury eco-tourism. The latest is the British tycoon Richard Branson, who built a pleasure palace on nearby Necker island.

Like its founder, Little Dix is rich but eccentric. The hotel's manager describes it as "shockingly simple".

but with rooms averaging \$400 a night, simplicity comes at a price. Half the rooms still have no air conditioning, and many bathrooms have no bath tubs, only showers. There are no televisions, and telephones were placed in the rooms only last year. There is no swimming pool, although Shandlin plans to build a fitness centre and what he calls a meditation pool — one of those pools on the edge of a



Treasure island: with the children's centre devoid of Disney or Nintendo, young guests at Little Dix think green, with shell-collecting expeditions and lessons in local crafts provided

Douglas D. Thomson

cliff which seems to flow into the blue horizon. That is how Rockefeller liked it. "He did not want bath tubs because he felt it would insult islanders who had no water in their homes," Shandlin explained.

Now in his 80s, Rockefeller still visits Little Dix. Shandlin recalled how he saw the millionaire sweating in the midday heat under a coconut palm, calling his New York office from a public phone. He asked if he wanted to use the hotel's air-conditioned office. "No," he replied. "The best things in life are free. Few things give me a thrill these days and one of them is to call my office from under a coconut palm."

By modern resort standards, Little Dix is small. It has 96 rooms scattered in cottages along a glorious semi-circle of white sand, backed by a sculptured garden of palms, tropical flowers, cacti and shrub. The beach is protected by a coral reef with a single narrow opening. The lagoon inside invites lazy swimming and snorkelling.

But the scale of the project cannot be underestimated. When Rockefeller bought 142 acres of land in Little Dix Bay and leased a further 368 acres of Crown land adjoining the property in the late 1960s, there were only 600 inhabitants on Virgin Gorda. There was no running water and no electricity.

The American philanthropist's idea was to develop a resort that would be consistent with his philosophies of conservation but enable

guests to relax in simple comfort in a setting of great natural beauty. He built similar properties on other Caribbean islands as part of his Rock Resorts group, but Little Dix was the jewel in the crown.

He used local stone, red cedar, purple heart, locust wood, mahogany and wallaby shingles to construct his property. Later he built one of the finest yachting harbours in the Caribbean complete with haul-out, storage and repair facilities run by the hotel in the small settlement of Spanish Town.

Rockefeller sold his properties three years ago. Little Dix is now owned by Bankers Trust and managed by Rosewood, the Dallas luxury hotel group. It has spent \$10m rebuilding the place, which was

badly damaged by three hurricanes last year. Tall date palms were shipped from Israel by container ship for instant landscaping and a Boeing 747 jumbo was chartered to bring 4,000 pieces of furniture from the Philippines.

Although changes have been made, Shandlin, who worked with Rockefeller before joining Rosewood, insisted the new management was anxious to preserve the character of the resort. The atmosphere is at times similar to a Caribbean version of Reid's, the grand old watering hole in Madeira where an institution and dinner jackets are *de rigueur* in the dining room.

The dress code at Little Dix is less formal. But tea is also served on the terrace under the open dining pavilion every afternoon at 4.30. Like Reid's, the manager hosts a cocktail party for guests every Monday evening. On Fridays, guests are invited to join the director of horticulture on a tour of the gardens.

Some allowances have to be made to modern times. Only recently has the hotel allowed children under five to stay. "But we take small children under control," added Shandlin.

The children are tidied away in air-conditioned rooms with glass windows to control the noise, and cared for in a children's centre run by two teachers. There is no Disney or Nintendo in the centre and the children are encouraged to think green, with shell-collecting expeditions on a tour of the gardens.

Even former presidents do not have keys to their rooms. There are no keys. The island is one of the safest in the Caribbean, in sharp contrast to the nearby US Virgin Islands, which have become one of the highest-crime regions in the US. "Everybody here knows everybody and there is nowhere for a criminal to hide," one local said.

There is, however, a drug problem in the islands because of the archipelago's position as the last staging post between Colombia and the US. "A typical pattern is an air drop at night in our waters," explained David Mackilligan, the governor. "The consignment is then taken by fast boat to St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands."

Father White said the bishop nearly fell off his chair when he told him his new church of St Ursula in Spanish Town lay in the heart of the settlement's red light district. "I meant it literally," the parish priest explained.

After receiving an unexpected \$500,000 donation from a couple of eccentric Americans, Father White was able to build his church on a hill dominating the town, with magnificent views over the Sir Francis Drake Channel and other islands. Its name was chosen because Christopher Columbus was so struck by the island's beauty that he compared them to St Ursula and her 11,000 virgins.

Father White also erected two red beacons on top of the crosses on the roof of St Ursula. "I simply had to do it. I didn't want one of those small drug smuggling aircraft flying low at night without its lights on crashing into our lovely new church."

Paul Betts was a guest of Little Dix Bay, PO Box 70, Virgin Gorda, BVI. Tel 1 809 495 6565, Fax 1 809 495 5063. He flew with American Airlines, which operates services from London to Tortola via San Juan, Puerto Rico. UK reservations, Tel 0345 7879703.

Languor that harboured a genius

Nigel Andrews visits Fort Myers to pay homage to inventor Thomas Edison

As a film critic I knew that 1995-96 would be a dangerous time. The world would be ravaged by 100th birthday celebrations for the cinema. Television would go berserk with Hollywood documentaries; publishing companies would release truck-loads of encyclopaedias; and Britain's Lord Attenborough would rouse the nation through fears and side-whiskers.

Was there some town one could escape such enforced delirium, just for a week or two? Some spot where one could pay respect to cinema's birthday without being trampled to death by it?

Fort Myers is the Gulf Coast of Florida was the answer. I knew it of old, a languid sprawl of rivers, inlets and palm-lined avenues where Thomas Alva Edison had his winter home. Edison picked it at the end of the last century, shortly after inventing the cinema. He was soon to pronounce: "There is only one Fort Myers and 90m people are going to find out about it."

In high season these days all 90m seem to be on Fort Myers Beach, a commercialised stoll joined to the city's outer limits by a high-arched bridge. If Edison came to this spot today he would have to jostle with the rest of America for a hot dog and milk shake. Inland though, Fort Myers becomes a dream genteel, spacious, luxuriant. You drive towards the town centre along McGregor Boulevard, most of whose flanking Royal Palms were imported from Cuba by Edison himself in 1900. Though Florida grows similar palms in the Everglades, a boat journey from Cuba was then thought easier than an ox-cart trek through the swamps.

Edison's estate is at the top of the avenue on both sides. On the right are the laboratory grounds, which can be entered either by car through a boughanvillea-clad Hispanic archway or by foot through a wicket gate guarded by a tall tree with a raccoon at the top. This kohl-



More than just a plant collector: Thomas Edison in his laboratory

eyed creature is in permanent residence, peering down at you from the highest fork.

On the boulevard's left, bordered in a jungle-like garden, is the Edison house. Cool white rooms stuffed with mementoes open their windows to the Gulf Coast zephyrs and any stray red cardinal, that most striking of Florida's small birds, one of which flies in and sings from a window ledge.

You can look at the house and laboratory in any order. But if you do the house and garden first, prepare for the terror of the conducted tour. You need one, since as well as inventing everything from the radio and gramophone to the electric toaster, Edison was a plant collector.

The 9-acre grounds contain 300 plant and tree varieties, most of them foreign to the US.

Orchids run riot on mango trees. Frangipani and Java plum scent the air. A sausages tree and fried egg tree live in judicious proximity. Cannonball and dynamite trees — the latter is shotgun-loud as it explodes its seeds over 300ft — may help to explain Edison's premature deafness. And the panama hat palm's fibre is, naturally, used to produce panama hats.

Meanwhile across the boulevard, standing outside the green wooden shed that bears the historic sign "laboratory", is Florida's largest banyan tree. This root-trailing, boardwalk-threaded monster was given to Edison in 1924 by the tycoon Henry Firestone.

All else besides, Edison pioneered the motor tyre. Urged on by friend-

ship with Firestone and proximity to Henry Ford, whose own winter home-cum-museum happens to be next door to Edison's in Fort Myers, the inventor grew goldenrod in his garden to make rubber. A piece of it, dated 1927, sits in awesomely well-preserved state on the desk in his laboratory.

This building, a long clapboard shack painted dark green and blend with nature, is a time-capsule in

disguise. Walking round it, your jaw keeps dropping at the realisation of how much this man actually invented. The guidebook, trying to keep up, contains sentences such as "he left the telephone temporarily and invented the phonograph". Edison invented 1,097 patents, all of which are in use today.

You can see his experimental model phonograph, plus the first ever record, of *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, recorded on a 5in by 5in strip of tin foil. Losing his hearing in old age, Edison would place his teeth on the record player's wooden frame to catch the recording's vibrations.

You see his early mimeograph machine, his first microphone, his collection of trial storage batteries, an invention that took more than 40,000 experiments; his successful model for a miner's lamp; his patented toaster, insulated wire, electric light bulb, hair curler, percolator, cigar lighter, waffle iron, spark plugs...

Almost the only thing Edison did not invent was the dictaphone. He worked on a similar machine that he called the Ediphone. But the first dictaphone was made by, believe it or not, a Mr Dick.

The tour's grand finale is the presentation of the 12 different models of film projector, from home to commercial, all made by Edison. Here for the movie buff are the very origins of the motion picture: an art that depends on forcing light through machinery so tortured and tortuous that only a mad scientist, and that the greatest of them, could have thought it up.

Not all this brainstorming was done in Fort Myers. Edison created his "Black Maria", the first moving picture studio, up in his longer-established habitat in New Jersey. Likewise the Kinetograph, kinetograph and kinoskop. But the Fort Myers museum, in addition to its dazzling collection, commemorates the place where Edison tinkered on tirelessly into old age.

Cannes in a cold climate

Logic suggests that if a French woman who knits is a *tricoteuse*, one who plays Scrabble must be a *scrabbleuse*. Signs for a Scrabble contest at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes were posted exclusively in the masculine singular, but no contestants in the sous sol, silently piecing together words against the clock, were exclusively feminine.

Wandering in search of something less sequalchur, my eye was caught by a placard announcing "Scrabble Initiation Mary". Nowhere was surely where the action was. Well, sort of. Mary was a dignified forty-something, teaching her clients the mystery of the anagram and, though it is hard to see how it would earn you many points, the palindrome. "Madam," read a sign in her improvised classroom, "I'm Adam."

It is an advantage of off-season weekend breaks that you feel no pressure to do anything in particular. Certainly no pressure, though the March sun was shining at a benevolent 15°C on the Croisette and rash bathers braved the Mediterranean, to stretch out on one of those private beaches where, in summer, a lounger will cost you 220 or more for an eight-hour stint.

I ambled into the *Festival des Jeux* on a whim. It was being staged in a building which, each May, is home to the Cannes film festival. Outside the stars and directors have left their palm prints in concrete, as they have on the pavement outside Mann's Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. But here they honour not just the giants of Hollywood but the likes of Scott Fitzgerald and Claude Berri.

Not far away an affable young man called Philip offered to write your name on a grain of rice for FF30. I remembered being able to buy a five-course lunch for less. There was no more to it, he explained, than a steady hand, a magnifying glass and a *style* with a very fine point. He could cram in almost as many characters as there are in the full title of a Spanish duke but he was otherwise a journalistic disappointment, since he could not remember penning the name of a single screen idol.

There were relatively few foreigners about. Cannes offers other

benefits in winter. There is rarely any need, for example, to book a table for dinner. In the old town, Le Suquet, some *patrons* spent Friday evening gazing into the steep streets in the hope of luring some hungry, passing tour group.

The weather inevitably proved fickle. By Saturday a cold wind was blowing from the Alpes Maritimes and I made an excursion to Antibes and the Picasso Museum. Picasso used the Château d'Antibes as a studio in 1946, and the time he spent there with his mistress Francoise Gilot was particularly happy. There is a warmth and a twinkle about the work inspired by his brief stay, above all in the fine collection of ceramic dishes and their cornflower-blue grapes, fat cherries and swift paint strokes.

There was some warmth, too, in the basement of the Comic Strip Café, on whose racks I was amused to find, alongside *Tin Tin*, a little called *Biggles et Le Dernier Zappeur*.

Out on the headland among the unrented villas of the rich and famous, the chill returned. Here is the Château Croë, where Edward and Mrs Simpson stayed; Jules Verne's former villa Les Chênes Verts, near the Hotel du Cap and the Eden Roc; and the Belles Rives, where Scott Fitzgerald came. In winter you can only imagine ghostly cocktail laughter on the wind.

Sunday brought rain and a trip to the splendid covered market in Cannes to buy fresh goats cheese and *bleu des Causses* for dinner that evening back home.

Later, while stuffing my crumbly *baguettes* into the overhead bin on the flight home, I wondered if the *scrabbleuses* were still at it. Then it occurred that the second person plural of "to leave" (*quitter*) would be a killer on a French Scrabble board, with the Q and the Z both on double squares.

Roger Bray
■ Roger Bray stayed at the Noga Hilton, Cresta Holidays (0161-926 9999) offers two-night weekend breaks there, flying with Air France. In late March and April the cost is £236 a person (bed and breakfast) in a twin room. Airport transfers from Nice are not included. A Group A hire car for two days costs £56.

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TRAVEL

The graveyard was enormous, the size of a small farm, and dotted haphazardly over its fresh green grass were hundreds of grey headstones, some tall, some short, all facing in the same direction and all without inscription.

With ragged tops like the tattered edges of torn newspaper, most of the stones looked unfinished. And so they were, far from being a place of the dead, each one of these "stones" was a living termite mound, a high-rise city of vibrant activity.

These so-called magnetic termite mounds are only a few inches thick but about 6ft tall and half as wide. They are as smooth as a part-sucked lolly and aligned on a north-south axis in order to obtain the maximum warmth from the early and late sun but not to overheat at midday. Grass-eating termites inhabit these solar-powered homes and it is claimed that each mound consumes the equivalent of a large herbivore.

Magnetic termite mounds are unique to the region of Litchfield, a new, 165,000-acre, national park, a couple of hours' drive to the south of Darwin in Australia's Top End.

Its centre is a great plateau of hard sandstone with a softer, eroded sandstone on top. Like a wet sponge on a brick, the soft rock holds permanent water and releases it as springs to tumble over high ochre cliffs into deep, dark pools in a series of picturesque waterfalls.

The result is a dry open forest veined with green pockets of monsoon rainforest which follow the course of the creeks or streams.

Overshadowed by larger and better known Kakadu, many visitors hardly give Litchfield a second glance, rushing to several of its best known falls in little more than an afternoon.

And they go to busy public places with large car parks and picnic areas where steps and railings enable swimmers to reach the water easily. At one I even watched a bloated green goanna, or monitor lizard, ill-tempered and over-fed, terrorise picnickers for bits-bits.

By walking less than a mile, Terry Patroni, our guide, took us away from the crowds to exquisite pools with their own glistening cascades - places we would never have found without his direction.

Admittedly, it was hot but



A water monitor, a harmless aquatic lizard, happy to bask on the river bank

Michael J. Woods

A flicker of outback blue

Michael J. Woods finds hidden treasures in Litchfield National Park

we took it at a steady pace, pausing occasionally to drink fresh water from the creek which swirled beside us and, with the promise of a swim at the end, it was well worth the effort. The path lead to these secluded treasures and Patroni follows a different route both in and out on each occasion to conceal his tracks. Sometimes he walks on bed-rock, at others he follows a pig trail.

Our destinations were not of sufficient size and grandeur to suck in the masses. And we felt as though we were the first to have set eyes on some areas.

Brilliant damselflies and dragonflies darted and hovered over the water. They avoided the tough, strategically placed spiders' webs but were rarely a match for rainbow bee-eaters, gloriously plumaged little birds which darted from carefully selected perches and then returned to beat their prey against the preferred twig with quick flicks of their bills.

At one pool, two water monitors, harmless aquatic lizards, were happy to bask on the

bank and allow me to come within a couple of yards before slipping silently into the depths. Even the water, warmed from flowing as a thin skin over hot rocks, is welcoming.

We camped on a private site in the traditional Australian way, unrolling our swags or bedrolls under the stars and finally kicking our mosquito nets around the mattress edges.

During the day we slapped the occasional horse fly. At night mosquitoes made long sleeves and trousers advisable. A little insectivorous bat, silent in comparison with its flying fox relatives, was a welcome visitor, patrolling outside my net and picking hungry whirling insects from its folds.

After a supper of crisp stir-fried vegetables, with steaks which covered half the plate, Patroni, who once mustered cattle for a living, explained how to deal with a troublesome bull. "You gallop alongside," he explained casually. "And grab its tail. Then you step off

your horse. As the bull turns to attack, he trips over his own front feet and goes down. Grab a hind leg, hold it up and you have him."

I fell asleep wondering how you could possibly practise stepping off a horse at full gallop with a ton of angry bull in one hand!

Near the track to our campsite was the home of a great bower bird, an archway of grasses covering its collection of lovingly collected objects.

This particular species gathers white things - small shells and stones - and sometimes green ones such as broken glass.

Strangely enough I had seen one of these birds displayed at the award-winning Territory Wildlife Park only a few days before. About 24 miles "down the track", as Top Enders affectionately call the tarred Stuart Highway, which straddles the country from Darwin to Adelaide, this park sets out to exhibit only those species found in the Northern Territory.

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Road Test

Executive cars that are equal but different

Stuart Marshall compares the virtues of three leading luxury marques

Three cars have been named by British motoring magazines in the past year as the best luxury executive saloon: the Jaguar XJ6, the Mercedes-Benz E-Class, and the BMW 5-Series. But only six weeks after one respected monthly had switched the crown from the XJ6 to the new E-Class, it deposed the Mercedes in favour of the new BMW 5-Series, long before this was due to go on sale in the UK.

It is all good clean fun - but is it relevant? Do managing directors swap their Jaguars for Mercedes and then, almost before finding out what all the

knobs are for, realise their mis-take and order BMWs? Of course not. In the real world there are Jaguar people, Mercedes people and BMW people. For the most part they stay with the marque they like. Only a small minority - the trade puts it at about 15 per cent - flits from one to another. At the heart of the matter is a simple truth: XJ6, E-Class and 5-Series are all highly covetable cars, but they are different.

Jaguar users put up with some lack of passenger and boot space but glory in the Jermyn Street ambience of a traditional British interior. One cannot get sentimental about

Mercedes, a make which majors in bank vault standards of strength, safety and durability. Younger management-level motorists are drawn to BMWs. As a senior BMW person said the other day: "If you want to drive from here to eternity and back, buy a Mercedes. But if you want to enjoy yourself, have a BMW."

Last month I drove a Mercedes-Benz E3000 automatic 1,250 miles (2,000km) to Geneva and back. It held a near silent 85mph/137kph on the auto-route, dealt effortlessly with alpine passes, felt rocks solid at all times and achieved just over 35mpg (8.07 litres/100km) of diesel. It rode a shade more resolutely, made less road noise and had more comfortable seats, but was otherwise typical of all the Mercedes cars I have grown to respect over the years. It was not an exciting car, just totally competent and confidence inspiring.

Last week I tried two of the new BMW 5-Series in Spain.

New and old 5-Series are essentially similar, though the sheer harmony of the new one's looks makes it the most elegant saloon BMW has produced. It manages to appear a little smaller than before but is slightly longer, wider and lower and - going against the safer-has-to-be-heavier trend - is lighter by 35kg.

Some weight has been saved by using aluminium for many chassis components normally made from steel.

Initially, British buyers are being offered in-line, 6-cylinder petrol engines of 2.5-litres (in a model confusingly badged as the 528i) and 2.8-litres capacity. The 2.5-litre produces 170hp compared with the 2.8-litre engine's 193hp. Both develop maximum torque (in other words, they pull hardest) at modest revolutions, the 2.5-litre particularly so.

Both have split personalities.

While eager to spin musically

up to 5,000rpm and over, they are muscular in mid-range. So



The new BMW 5-Series: more advanced, better equipped and cheaper than the model it replaces, it is 'the most elegant saloon BMW has produced'

traffic driving is relaxed, there are fuel economy benefits and ample pick-up in fourth and fifth gears.

Other engines will become available later in the year. They are a 150hp, 2.0-litre, 6-cylinder for the entry model 520i, and 3.5-litre and 4.4-litre V8s. BMW's class-leading 2.5-litre, 143hp, 6-cylinder turbodiesel in the new 5-Series has been tuned to pull even harder at very low speeds before the turbocharger cuts in. Its torque

is the same as that of the 2.8-litre petrol unit, but is developed at little more than half the engine speed.

At present only five-speed manual gears are available, but five-speed automatics are on their way, for petrol and diesel models alike. All new 5-Series cars have a traction control system to curb wheel-slip and improve stability on slippery surfaces.

The long, winding ascent from the Costa del Sol to

Ronda on the beautifully engineered C339 could have been designed to let the BMWs show off the precision of their handling, sure-footed roadholding and silken power delivery. The 528i I drove was not air conditioned but an open sunroof caused no buffeting and hardly any wind roar at speeds of up to 60mph/96kph.

Buyers of luxury executive cars seek value for money. Despite the technical advantages and better-quality equipment - at last BMW throws in a six-speaker radio-cassette - all but one of the new 5-Series cars are cheaper than the models they replace.

Prices start at £20,850 for the 520i - a 3 per cent reduction - and go up to £41,850 (a rise of 5.4 per cent) for the 540i. Most BMW 5-Series sales in Britain are SE (special equipment) versions with standard air conditioning. These will cost between £24,250 (520i SE) and £29,350 (528i SE).



Jaguar drivers reflect the traditional British ambience of the car's interior



Mercedes models big on strength, safety and durability

Rallying / John Griffiths

A safari like no other

The vulture redefined the boundaries of optimism. Tommi Mäkinen was not only alive but wearing a crash helmet and driving his 300 horsepower Mitsubishi Lancer rally car when the bird dropped in for lunch, vis the car's roof vents, and instead became the lunch.

Wiping blood and feathers from car and overalls, Mäkinen could reflect that the East Africa Safari Rally, due to finish in Nairobi tomorrow night, is indeed different - as Kenya's home-grown safari veterans so proudly insist - from any other on the 14-round world rally championship calendar.

So too, could Colin McRae, the diffident Scotsman who is reigning world rally champion. Today he, co-driver Derrick Ringer and their Prodrive Subaru were competing in the second leg of the 3,000km marathon - so far, to rivals relief, without recourse to the spear awarded to McRae's initiation as a Masai warrior at a colourful Nairobi ceremony.

Even Ford team manager John Taylor does not sound convinced by his own assertion that the safari is "just a rally like any other".

His own team, too, is not taking his words wholly seriously. The daunting logistics of moving men and machinery around the world are common to all world championship rallies, suggests team co-ordinator Trevor Godden. It is when the car heads into the unforgiving Kenyan bush that similarity with other events ends.

As if to back the Godden view, two Peugeots skid to a halt after their own pre-rally reconnaissance. David Horsey and Angus Leckie are both Kenyans, veterans of not just the Safari but rallies globally. "Bloody hell," mutters Horsey, "we've just done 100km and they were worse than the entire London-Sydney marathon."

Horsey and Leckie have encountered a road which has been washed away. When the rains come, such hazards appear without warning. With large straying game they are the rally's most feared feature. Unlike the works Ford drivers, Carlos Sainz and the veteran Swedish maestro Stig Blomqvist, Horsey and the rest of the "Kenya cowboys" - the domestic privateers - have no helicopters riding shotgun above to warn of pending disaster.

Sainz and Blomqvist have one each. So do most of the other works teams. And it is the helicopters which most

starkly symbolise the passing of the "old" Safari. Conceived 43 years ago as a non-stop bash through the bush to mark Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, the Safari was, for 30 years, a test as much of stamina as of speed.

Gunnar Palm, who co-drove the Finn Hannu Mikkola's Escort to victory in 1972, recalls that "fast average speed then was maybe 80 miles per hour and we would drive non-stop for 36 hours. Now they return to Nairobi every night to sleep. But the average speed - the average - will be 100 miles per hour plus. It is indeed a different world."

It is a different world, too, in terms of costs. Few teams talk budget details. Most acknowledge that costs are rising fast towards - indeed may already have reached the financial stratosphere of Formula One motor racing.

The World Rally Teams Association has been formed, much like FOCA, the constructors' association of Formula One, to negotiate with air freight companies from a position of communal strength.

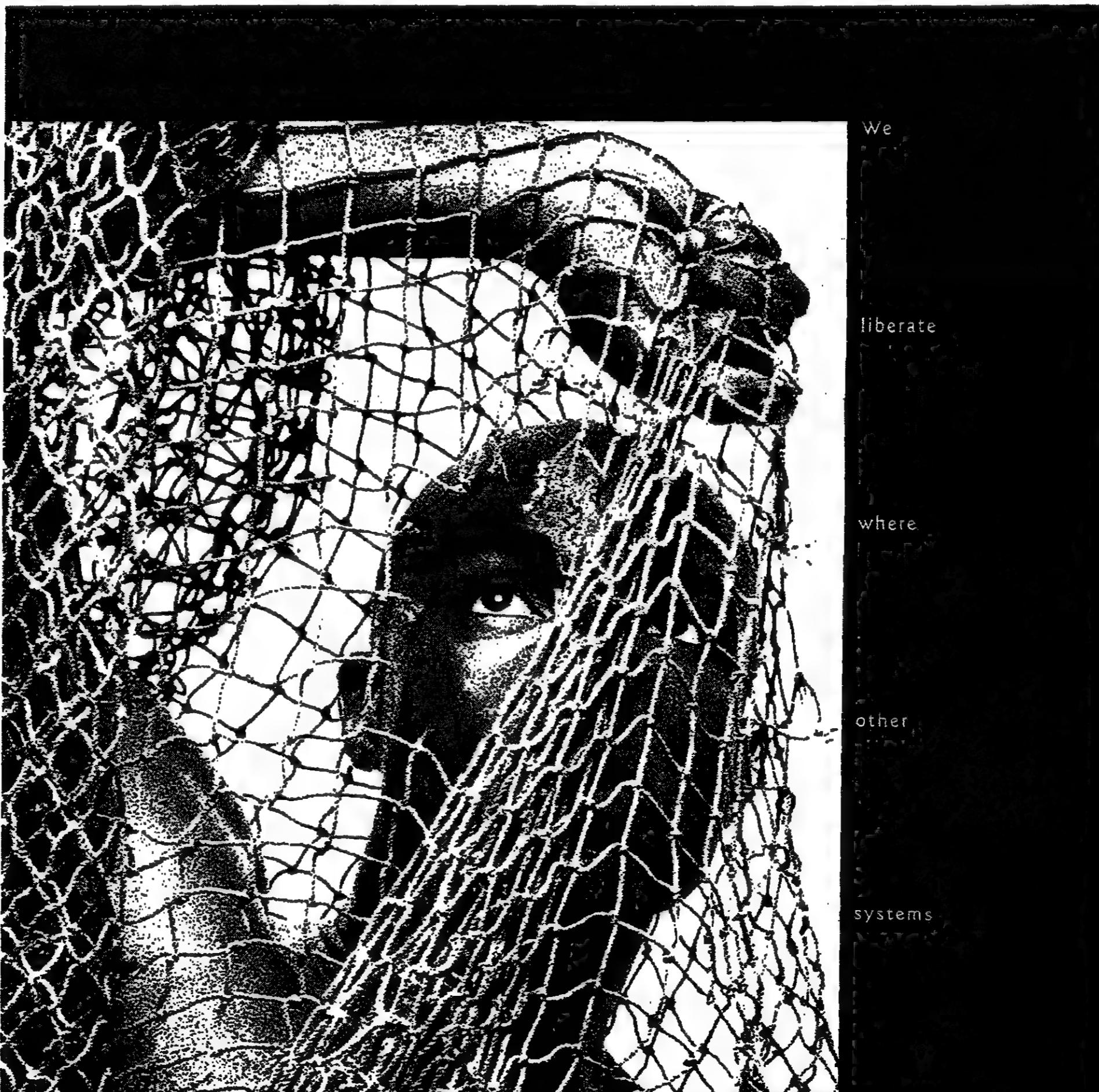
With a single freighter unloading eight rally cars and a pair of helicopters, and airliners disgorging works teams each counted by the dozen, it is clear there is much on which to negotiate.

The costs, says Palm, "are going mad". But there is little, if any, sign of resentment among local drivers. Partly, that is in recognition of the safari's public relations role in a country where the economy, now badly fraying, grows more dependent on tourism. Partly, too, it is recognition that the doughtiest Kenya cowboy can no longer fight helicopters, bottomless pockets and cutting-edge technology.

Yet it is still not quite that simple. The Nairobi bookies may have been quoting Britain's McRae as favourite but the dark horse at the starting ramp was Kenyan Ian Duncan.

Unusually, Duncan was given a works Toyota drive three years ago and promptly came third. In 1994 he won outright.

His mount in this year's Safari is still a Toyota Celica GT4 and it is a works car in all but name; it is entered instead under the name of Toyota Kenya. Duncan thus remained in a position to be a lonely upholder of Kenyan honour. Even so, with Safari conditions, nothing is ever certain. The Safari can still be just a lottery.



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SPORT

The Varsity Boat Race
Unsung heroes on the Tideway

Phillip Halliday previews the contest with a look at who will control this year's battle

The 142nd varsity boat race for the Bessieeter Trophy today at 3.30pm is likely to be decided by two men the coxes. This year's duel is expected to be close. If so, the person with the rudder strings and the line steered are all-important.

The 4½-mile race on the stretch of the Thames from Putney to Mortlake, known as the Tideway, is like no other. Most races are in a straight

line with little advantage gained from the effects of the tide. But the Oxford and Cambridge boat race has three bends and a quirky stream that fluctuates down the course.

The boat that starts on the Middlesex station has the advantage of the first Fulham bend but it is small and the Surrey crew has the inside of the next large Chiswick bend. However, if the stream is strong it may be better not to cut the first corner

where the stream is slacker.

The weather can compound the coxes' problems. For instance, if the water is rough the cox may seek calmer conditions in the lee of the bank. Add to this the need to motivate and drive the crew and the coxes' lot becomes a tough one. The cox is the unsung hero, rarely given credit for victory, often castigated in defeat.

This year's coxes are poles apart but have at least one

thing in common - aggression.

The Dark Blue cox, Todd Kristol, from the US, coxed for four years at Harvard University on the river Charles. The Charles is placid compared with the Tideway. "The river in London is daunting at first. I wasn't used to the stream but for the past two weeks I have been living and breathing the Tideway," he says.

The Oxford camp have taken Kristol out on the river in a launch with a Thames boat-

man. He has talked Kristol Chester and has raced on the

through the way the river Tideway 25 times, albeit in the behaves, the ebb and flow opposite direction to the varying conditions from day to day. Kristol has three fellow countrymen and a Canadian, Jeremy Howick, in crew and all agree the mo Tideway was a problem area.

The Light Blue cox, Pat Whymann, has more Tideway experience. The first year amateur from Peterhouse '98

cut his teeth at King's, so

and the rules to the limit.

So the umpire will have an interesting ride as he tries to keep the crews apart. There has never been a disqualification in the Blue Boat race.

Whymann says he will play on the crew's pride. "Some of the boys are *prima donnas*. I will play on that. Remind them it is the six-months' training. Insult Oxford and their president.

"I will be nervous but I must remain calm. The crew doesn't want a cox screaming."

Oxford's Kristol has had to change his style of coxing since leaving the Charles. "I had to relearn my coxing vocabulary and get used to not coaching as much because at Oxford we have so many

crews," he says.

"I'm going to do what it takes to win. I will have to be aggressive off the start."

Oxford have one old Blue, Rob Clegg, as well as the large overseas contingent. In contrast, most of the Cambridge crew are British undergraduates with one old Blue, Miles Barnett, and five from last year's impressive reserve crew, Goldie.

The preparation in the final

week will prove to be crucial. Oxford was coached by Dan Topolski who oversaw 16 wins in 17 years between 1976 and 1992, and who returned last year to try to turn the Light Blue tide of three consecutive wins.

"The foreigners are a great bunch this year, sparky, fun, challenging and full of balls," he says. "It has been a long haul over the year to mould the different styles of rowing and the resulting bruised egos into one cohesive unit. Topolski says that was the biggest challenge. The final polished product is only just being prepared.

In the final week, Cambridge

handed over coaching to New Zealand's national coach, Harry Mahon. Mahon, who kept in touch with Cambridge throughout the training, admits this is a less experienced squad. "Cambridge, although not as fast as last year, have got a high power-to-weight ratio and the stroke is deceptively strong."

He agrees the coxes will be crucial. For the first time the two boat clubs have nominated a charity, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, to benefit from the proceeds raised.

Drugs in Sport / Pat Butcher

Litigation is the name of the game

After a dispute at an Olympic Games earlier this century when British influence was greater than nowadays, a foreign delegate is reported to have said: "So, Britannia waives the rules again."

That's how it might seem to many after the recent decision by the normally hardline International Amateur Athletics Federation to absolve Diane Modahl, the 800m runner, of any drugs guilt. To others, it will be a signal to set the lawyers among the laboratory equipment.

Modahl's appeal, against procedural irregularities during a test in Lisbon two years ago, had been first dismissed and then upheld by the British federation. In spite of this, Modahl is suing for £280,000 for the time that she has had to wait for vindication, since she was ejected from the Commonwealth Games on the verge of her 800m title defence.

The British federation has already spent close to £100,000 defending the case and, should Modahl succeed in her litigation, the flock of sponsors already flying away from athletics worldwide will migrate even further.

Modahl was fortunate in having several doctors/chemists in the UK willing to do what, in effect, qualified as biochemical research on her behalf. As legislators against drugs in sport have always pointed out in frustration, there is little documentation on the effects and dangers of a huge intake of "sports drugs", since no one in their right mind would dose up on some of the stuff (such as bovine steroids) that competitors are taking clandestinely.

But demands for compensation are as worldwide as drug taking. It was the Dutch Reynolds case which first raised the issue. The 400m world record holder was banned for two years in 1990, but went to the US Supreme Court, arguing similar procedural irregularities to Modahl, plus restriction of trade. He was awarded \$27.3m but, after the IAAF employed a Washington lobbying firm, the regulations concerning professional sports were amended, and the case was overturned.

The German experience since reunification has been a minefield. As in other areas of society, west Germans have

done everything they can to discredit the former East Germans. The eagerness with which Kathrin Krabbe, the 1991 world sprint champion, has been pursued by the new, west German dominated administration hints at victimisation. Yet the German federation recently agreed that she had the right to sue the IAAF.

German civil courts will not uphold drug bans for longer than two years, while the IAAF ban is four years. The longer censure was introduced, principally at the behest of the British in 1991. In the first big rebuff of his presidency, Primo Nebiolo's move to reintroduce two-year bans was kicked out in Göteborg at last year's World Championships.

And there is more to come from Germany. Thanks to Werner Franke, a leading biochemist, who is married to a former East German athlete, Brigitte Berendonnek, the couple have pursued East German drugs doctors/administrators with an intellectual vengeance. There was a general amnesty announced for all athletes after reunification. But Berendonnek published a book based on East German sports files detailing the drugs fed to leading athletes over the past 20 years.

They took Olympic long-jump champion, Helke Drechsler, to court, when she was unwise enough to say at her post-Olympic press conference that Berendonnek was lying in respect of her drugs intake. Berendonnek won.

The couple claim that their campaign is similar to the post-war pursuit of Nazis, a demand for admission of guilt. They have taken up the case of former weightlifter Roland Schmidt who had to have drug-induced breasts removed surgically three years ago.

Schmidt lost a civil case against his former sports "doctors" last week, but it could go to the Supreme Court.

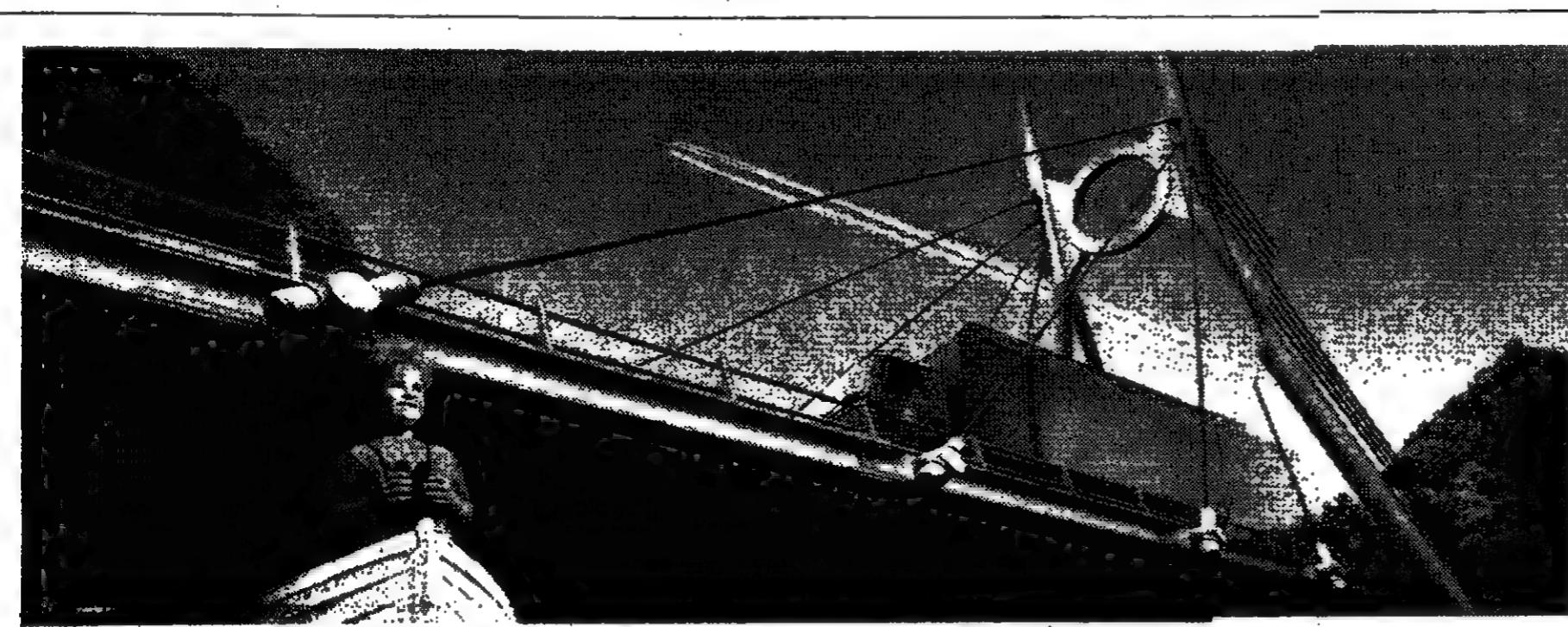
Schmidt has duly filed an appeal, which will not be lost on the IAAF and sports administrators everywhere. The IAAF says it is not liable for national federation costs in drug cases. That remains to be seen, when the Modahl case gets under way in earnest.

That athletics takes the rap for every other sport which is lukewarm on drugs legislation is undeniable. But athletics, as the main Olympic discipline, cannot run away from it.



Pulling their weight: Oxford put in some hard work on the Thames near Barnes

Fiona Hanson/PA



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ARTS

The Diaghilev of derring-do

Nigel Andrews talks to film director John Woo, who makes one forget the bloodletting and think of art

John Woo, who attained near-mythical status in Hong Kong as an action director, before migrating to Hollywood, sits in his 20th Century Fox office fielding my questions about screen violence.

Just why does it have such popular appeal, I ask? Especially in our own decade of *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Desperado* and indeed Woo's own first American film, the mayhem-intensive *Jean Claude Van Damme* actioner *Hard Target*. Is violence a movie equivalent of rock music?

"Yes, yes, I think so," says the white-shirted, immaculate Woo. "I know that in my case young audiences seem to find some message, some extreme excitement in the action. They find something beyond violence. It becomes almost like a poetry of action."

Brought over to Tinseltown on a tide of praise from such as Scorsese and Tarantino, who admired his high-style Asian thrillers (*A Better Tomorrow*, *The Killers*), Woo has just completed his second American film *Broken Arrow*. The Travolta-starring military thriller, opening in Britain next week, earned back its \$60m budget in one brisk month in the US. Now Woo sits in America, where he has obtained "permanent resident" status, trying to ensure that cultural transplanting does not mean cultural deflowering.

"My first movie here was a shock," he says. "In Hong Kong everything is simple. You have one or two meetings with a studio or finance company to go through story, cast and budget and that's it. They don't even want to see any

footage till the movie is made. Here I've never known so many meetings. Six months I went on meeting and meeting for *Hard Target*!"

Even on *Broken Arrow*, whose rushes so impressed Fox that they raised the budget from an initial \$47m, Woo says he struggled to adjust to a movie culture obsessed with cost and control.

"I would have nine or ten days for an action sequence in Hong Kong. Here they only give me three or four. They think it is easy work! But it is only easy if you want the ordinary and conventional."

Which is not what this Diaghilev of derring-do is about. In a Woo film human bodies soar and fly across the screen, gunshots pepper out surreal tattoos, furniture self-destructs, banisters act as ski slopes, and the screen is so rhythmic, so kaleidoscopic that you forget about bloodletting and think of it as ballet.

If Bruce Lee broke all action movie rules and barriers in front of the screen, Woo has done the same from the director's chair. Or he would have if he ever sat down in one.

"I never like a painter," he says. "I never pre-planned action scenes in Hong Kong. I'd gather the cast and crew in the morning and say, 'Okay, this scene is about two undercover cops ambushed by 20, 30 guys in a restaurant. So I need that many stunt guys and costumes.'

"Then I look about. There's a table - what can I do with it? A banister - ah, maybe the hero will slide down it shooting with two guns at the same time. And I walk round the set and everyone goes so

silent you can hear the wind blow. And then I begin 'possessed' by the scene. I start act it out for everyone. If the girls or are excited, I know audience will respond the same way. Then I shoot the whole scene with four or five cameras, some fast, some slow, to cover every angle and style I might want."

"It keeps everyone alive and interested. It keeps the surprised. If they're tired like a dog at the end of a day, they still sit up. John, that would be great, but it would be even better, let's do it."

Now, though, Woo left the land of power lunches project development". And he has encountered another impediment, heard of in Hong Kong's action-mena censorship.

"They take violence very seriously in America," he says, telling how he was required to *Hard Target* to avoid a restricted C17 certificate. "I was told to lose 10 per cent of the gunfire."

"Is he surprised? Surely we don't expect a violence-ridden copy like the US to get touchy at images that could stimulate violence?"

"But the violence in my movie like a cartoon, you know, or dancing," says Woo. "For some people, violence on screen is a bit of fantasy or wish-fulfilment. something they want to do in real life but can't. In the real world there is so much crime, so much unfrustrated. And in a film when the hero kills or beats up the bad guy, it seems he stands for them! I've seen people cheer and jump up in a cinema."

So Woo would hesitate before making a film in which evil triumphed?

"I would do it if it was an interesting script. But I try to emphasise that justice will eventually win."

It is not a moral vision shared by many movies today. Thanks to Tarantino, Stone and company, we're surrounded by lovable psychotics

asserting their higher charm before a floundering law-and-order system.

The "charm" of evil, as it happens, is central to *Broken Arrow*.

The film was scripted by Graham Yost, who dreamed up Dennis Hopper's charismatic bomber in *Speed*.

The new film's anti-hero is a mis-

ter-stealing air force pilot, played with grace abounding by a John Travolta fresh from magnetic hoodoo roles in *Pulp Fiction* and *Get Shorty*.

Woo admits that the devil has the best tunes in *Broken Arrow*. Pre-

view audiences roared for Travolta right up to his do-or-die last scene.

"He makes the character very human but also gives him such great presence," says Woo. "He's a charming baddie, an angel with an evil eye."

But justice and democracy finally

triumph, as commercial cinema would like us to believe they do in most parts of the world. There is one place, though, whose future not even Hollywood could light with rosy filters. As a Hong Kong emigrant, is Woo worried about his

own homeland, as the countdown to communism threatens the freedom of both its people and its cinema?

"I am worried. But I am hopeful too. Hong Kong film, I always feel, is a bit like an orphan. It has never had help from any government, it's

had to survive by its own wits."

After 1997, when they know

more about the new system and policy, the film people will find a way to fit in, to flourish, to keep making movies. Hong Kong people" - he gives a broad, conspiratorial smile - "are very tricky, you know!"



John Woo: 'Young audiences seem to find some message, some extreme excitement in the action, something beyond violence. It becomes almost like a poetry of action'

Some enchanted evening

Alastair Macaulay is bewitched by Irene Worth's rendition of 'A Portrait of Edith Wharton'

Brinkly, the great actress Irene Worth takes the Almeida Theatre stage and, speaking, begins to bewitch. She is 80 this year, and sometimes, even in mid-sentence, she can show you old age. But her charm, which is profound and complex and which floods the theatre at once, is richly mixed with youthfulness. Her voice has you immediately in thrall, but in due course there are moments when she pauses - again, sometimes in mid-sentence - and you just hang gratefully on her luminous face. London sees more great actors per annum than any other city, but enchantment like this occurs even here very seldom.

During just this one week at the Almeida, she has presented three different programmes: I write after the first, *A Portrait of Edith Wharton*. Standing at a lectern, in a crushed-gold gown of a colour somewhere between saffron, peach and honey, she reads to us for 90 minutes; but she knows the text so well that it is only there to guide her memory. At no moment do we feel any dichotomy between Worth and Wharton. The range and artistry of the one is channelled into serving the range and artistry of the other, so that one is tempted afterwards to speak of Wharton alone. (The sensual audacity of that passage about incest! the hilarity of that story about Henry James asking the way!) But it is Worth, not Wharton, who is 80 this year, and she deserves attention.

Her voice - I wish I had a recording - is all music, and there are many musicians who should envy what she seems to do as if without thought. The endings of phrases, for example. Actors are generally taught to avoid bringing sentences down as they end - newscasters are parodied for doing it - but she does it often, and beautifully, because she has so completely a sense of finish. But her phrasing goes beyond each sentence, because the thought does.

There are astonishing sudden decelerations in mid-line without stopping, like smooth transitions from fourth gear to first; seamless joins of one sentence to the next; a wealth of delicate but lucid dynamic markings, as when she says of Marcel Proust, with the lightest of mannered and staccato emphasis on the final three descending words, "I could not seek out this rare, pale, pale." The voice, gentle, is full of changing tone and colour, and sometimes adds a haunting nuance for a reason one cannot explain as when, while explaining quietly that the date was June 1914, she fills the word "June" with a darker colour from the chest.

While you listen, you look. The dark



Irene Worth: her voice has one immediately in thrall

look of the eyes against the light face and pale-fair hair is the most obviously detectable thing about her - the eyes dance - but everything soon becomes compelling: the prominent cheeks, the way the mouth returns to a line of repose or sometimes twitches the cheeks upwards, the sure line of the eyebrows, and more.

And yet how Irene Worth sounds - looks really - is beside the point. What affected me most - and what were, surely, closest to Wharton - were the moments when she suddenly became so suffused with Edith Wharton's emotion that she had not to express it but to suppress it. Whether it is the memory of a loveless marriage which drove both her and her

husband into breakdowns, or of a later love-affair ("To me it was a... devastating"), the extraordinary humanity of the moment lies in the way she tries not to indulge it, to express it with as much restraint as true feeling will permit. Of a father's tongue on his daughter's nipples: "Sucking them with a tender glutony". At other times she makes a sentence thrilling by indicating that mere words cannot suffice. "Marrakesh" (lifting eyes to look above her for a moment and to pause after the ravishing sound of the name itself) "is the great market of the South".

Yes, ravishing.

Almeida Theatre, N1. Ends April 6.

The Tate acquired one of the finest collections of contemporary art this week - 320 works by such leading American artists as Warhol, Twombly, Stelle and Nauman, plus big German names such as Beuys, Richter and Baselitz. But the Tate will not actually own these works: it will be giving wall space to the collection of the German automotive machine tool manufacturer, Josef Froehlich.

Each year, for four years, a group of paintings will arrive at Millbank, starting next month with Richter and Nauman, plus works by Polke and Carl Andre. Warhol, with portraits of Jackie Kennedy, Elvis and Liz Taylor, goes on show in May 1998.

There is, of course, a Bankside angle to this. The Tate will open its gallery of modern art there in 2000. It would be surprising if Froehlich did not want to see his paintings on display in such grand surroundings. Nick Serota, the Tate's director, is currently negotiating with many collectors interested in making gifts and bequests to Bankside. The new museum will boost this new private-public way of displaying art, so important in the modern and contemporary field where museums can rarely compete with private buyers in acquiring the masterpieces.

The Tate will miss its end of April deadline for raising the £6m it needs to match the Millennium Commission's £500m grant for Bankside, but enough money is in place to ensure the conversion work on Bankside has started.

The Holy Week's cover was Hamish Macbeth; for Easter, the resurrection celebrated is apparently that of Sir David Atkinson. I notice such that the Radio Times covers a toy with a morning bowl Gambaccini (a bland musical instrument and flavour).

Radio Times soft-pedals the crass festival of the country's jolly religion, perhaps to prevent columnist Polly Toynbee having another funny turn. She recently complained that religious programmes

Off the Wall/Anthony Thorncroft

Tate goes for loans

The government is in retreat on its insistence that lottery money can only be used for capital projects in the arts.

This week heritage secretary Virginia Bottomley repeated her January statement that lottery money can go towards training young artists; and Lord Gowrie, chairman of the Arts Council of England, reported that he was looking at ways to widen access to the arts for the young and the poor by using lottery funds to finance touring and reducing ticket prices. Soon there will be an announcement on lottery money for commissioning new plays, music, artworks, etc.

The government, for electoral reasons, is keen for the Arts Council to move rapidly, but there are some massive hurdles to overcome, not least over the money for new commissions. The current idea is that the copyright of any play, overtone, book or work of art created this way should rest with the lottery fund. The implications for copyright law are tremendous.

Next year the government will give way on the big one. The stabilisation fund will be revealed as an endowment fund in another name. Arts companies with deficits will

have them wiped out and replaced by a nest egg if they pledge to operate within budget in future.

The downside to this good news is that it will enable the Treasury to reduce the annual grant to the Arts Council for revenue funding, and when all the UK's major arts projects are in their new lottery built homes, with their endowments in place, it will be impossible to justify the arts receiving £200m a year from the lottery.

There has been one big loser from the lottery - the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. The foundation may have been born for an ignoble reason - an attempt by the pools companies to delay the introduction of the lottery by setting up their own source of arts and sports funding - but it proved a tremendous success. In five years more than 10,000 arts organisations have shared well over £200m in grants.

But the lottery has dented the revenue of the pools companies, and consequently the sum they hand over to the foundation. From a peak of £28m a year, of which the arts received a third, Grafton Endicott, which runs the foundation, anticipates this year an income of nearer £24m and is

Radio/Martin Hoyle

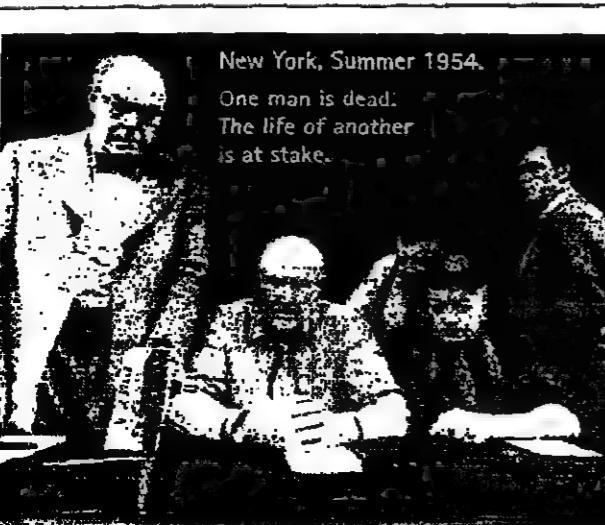
Soft-pedalling on Holy Week

were made by the religious. She should listen to Radio 3 of a morning for reassurance: sometimes the music programmes are presented by the unusual. It even managed to put out an opera based on the Old Testament without apparently troubling it: *billied as "suicide, murder, stripease, decapitation..."* Just some of the ingredients of an action-packed opera". *Salome*, of course, from the New York Met on Saturday, and rather interestingly conducted by Donald Runnicles, a Scot better known abroad than in Britain.

Holy Week, as the media seem nervous of calling it, has been marked by the start of a fascinating new series, *Science and Wonders* (Radio 4, Wednesday). It opened with bright nine-year-olds sounding rather more intelligent than a group of faintly adenoidal students; two groups asked their opinion of the existence of God. The first programme dealt with cosmology, the creation, hangs big and little. A nice lady astronomer referred to the universe as "mind-bogglingly large" and

faintly reminded me of Pam Ayers. The believers were on the whole a more sympathetic lot than the sceptics. But then they know that faith by definition does not need proof, while sceptics need to disprove it but cannot. A physical chemist from Lincoln College, Oxford, considered himself, uncharacteristically for his breed, insignificant, but, more in character, thought the rest of the world should realise how insignificant it is. An American voice said complexity, not size, was important; and sounded like Paul Gambaccini. Or perhaps things are just getting to me.

Quantum physics were touched on in the same breath as Tommy Cooper ("Just like that"). It was a stimulating opening, pros and cons vigorously contending over the "extraordinary set of coincidences" that conspired to make life. Unless, as Lincoln College deflatingly speculated, this universe is one of many, tumbled into existence by a chance mixture of freak conditions. It sounds like programme



Michael Edwards and Carole Winter
Photo: Alan Brinkley Production
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ROBERT EAST
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TIM HEALY
MAURICE KAUFMANN
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ARTS



Although his best was intermittent, it could be very good: Gustave Caillebotte's 'The Pont de l'Europe', 1876

More than an amateur dilettante

William Packer argues the case for Gustave Caillebotte, the 'unknown' Impressionist

The centenary of Gustave Caillebotte's death in 1894 was celebrated by a full retrospective at the Grand Palais in Paris, which travelled on to Chicago and then to Los Angeles last summer. A much smaller version of that show, but with some additional loans, now comes to London and the Sackler Galleries of the Royal Academy. Why the fuss?

The simple answer is that Caillebotte is known as an interesting figure of his time, but not generally as a painter, for which he is remembered only by a few familiar images – top-hatted men on balconies high above the *grands boulevards*, a modern iron railway bridge, workmen laying parquet, a man and woman walking beneath an umbrella in the rain. While the huge "Paris Street in the Rain" from the Chicago Art Institute, with its

dramatic perspective and stark silhouettes does not travel to England, Geneva's iron "Pont de l'Europe" does, along with one of the "Parquet Layers", and enough else to give the range and flavour of the work.

The truth is that at his best Caillebotte can be very good, but that best is intermittent, and his works can be dreadful. At times he takes a very odd view of human anatomy, especially of arms – as on the man drying himself after his bath – and hands – as on the man in a smock who walks towards us up the hill. His deuses and portraits can be very stiff, his colour garish, his touch crude.

But then, time and again, he surprises us with passages, indeed whole paintings, of real tenderness and subtlety, the touch light, the vision fresh and true. Behind that odd figure trudging up the hill we catch the real sense of the glistening summer landscape, with

the cool sea far below in the distance. Again he looks down from the cliff-top, high above the eccentric roofs and pinnacles of the villas by the sea. His beloved boats swing quietly on their buoys on the Seine at Argenteuil. In the small late self-portrait, the painter half turns towards the mirror, which is us; gently introspective.

In all these things, the image is achieved so deftly and truly that we begin to think of Renoir in the soft, tactic modelling of a figure, of Degas in the contre-jour interiors – and his radical tricks of composition, of Pissarro's fields and gardens, of Sisley, Monet, Manet along the river. With the lower paintings of us all but in a class of his own, for every thing was accepted, but Cezanne, Manet, Degas, Sisley, Pissarro, Monet and Renoir featured strongly among the 40 that were, Manet's "Balcony", Monet's "Gare St Lazare", and

such easy, attentive accuracy, those chrysanthemums so crisp and lush.

Younger than his fellow Impressionists and a late starter into the bazaar, Caillebotte died well before most of them at only 45, after a career of barely 20 years. His misfortune, if we can call it that, was to be both well-off and sociable, keen on such distractions as sailing and rowing. His means allowed him to patronise his fellows, itself perhaps an inhibition, buying early and

in all his qualities and faults, for the state after his death brought Impressionist and post-Impressionist works into French public collections for the very first time. Not everything was accepted, but Cezanne, Manet, Degas, Sisley, Pissarro, Monet and Renoir featured strongly among the 40 that were, Manet's "Balcony", Monet's "Gare St Lazare", and

the great "Bal du Moulin de la Galette" of Renoir among them. But there was nothing of Caillebotte himself, though the family did give a couple of good things later on – a "Rebours du parquet", and some houses in the snow.

While Caillebotte's unevenness as a painter has to be admitted, his subsequent obscurity other than as a remarkable and generous collector was no more deserved than would be an inflated reputation now. Here we see him in all his qualities and faults, for the most part more worthy than inspired, but capable of flights of brilliance that make us wonder at what might have been, had he lived longer, or had to work harder for a living, or simply been more consistent in his application.

He was an original too, in a modest way, bringing to Impressionism an academic thoroughness of method and a

quality of ironical social realism – a smart bourgeois couple on the heavy iron bridge, workmen laying expensive parquet, house-painters in the street. His high perspectives too were new, and his interest in near and far, in the traffic island far below laid out like a map, the figure on the balcony against the distance, the tiny figures seen through the railings.

But does it matter whether or not he was first to look

down on the boulevards, or

remark the dignity of labour,

or take a boat on the river? Not really. It is the paintings that matter, and they tell us clearly that Caillebotte was something more than an amateur and dilettante. We should give him his due.

Gustave Caillebotte – the Unknown Impressionist: The Royal Academy, Piccadilly W1 until June 23; Sponsored by Société Générale.

Our hero shrieked the cover of the Radio Times. "Why everyone loves Hamish Macbeth," it promised. Not everyone. Wednesday's *Points of View* (BBC) interviewed the author of the original stories about the wee highland community's whimsical policeman. The formidable M.C. Beaton who, like a disconcerting number of Scots, lives an unequivocal distance south of the border, in her case Gloucestershire, commented stoically on her character's six-foot-plus. Compared with the television actor's five-foot-eight, the actor's Glaswegianism as opposed to her rustic creation. By the time she was waxing contemptuous about the television adaptation's dog ("Wee Jock," dear lord) I knew I was not alone.

Hamish Macbeth is part of that retreat to cosiness also signalled by the success of *Ballykissangel*, another dimpling peek at quaint Celtic folk. The awful thing is that quaint Celtic folk like such things; they think it makes them look lovable, however unlike the real thing it is, rather like the country people who love *The Archers*. It flatters them, provides them with an antiseptic image.

Meanwhile Hamish Macbeth himself looks about as wistful as a ferret masticating a vole. His little community is a creaking cross between *Whisky Galore* and a Gaelic *Milk Wood*.

Television/Martin Hoyle Quaint Celtic folk at large

Wood. The character of the cop himself is still in fuzzy focus in the first instalment he kicked at Sister Helen Prejean, the American nun who inspired the Oscar-winning film *Dead Man Walking*. She is obviously one of the world's – one hesitates to say "do-gooders", the phrase is so eroded by irony, but good and compassionate she is, with a cheerfully brisk, no-nonsense articulateness, and that underlying sense that there is no time to waste that marks out the passionately committed.

Her sympathy is not merely for the convicted of death row but also for the relations of murder victims. Saddest of all was the scene when two groups of demonstrators faced one another outside the jail where a killer was due to be executed. The man's family and friends screamed and wailed not only at the authorities but at a forlorn middle-aged couple implacably facing them across the road: the unforgiving, unforgetting parents of a girl raped and murdered.

The programme showed Sister Helen advising behind the scenes on *Dead Man Walking* with director Tim Robbins and actress Susan Sarandon; all very worthy, as the movie doubtless is. The BBC now seems to regard itself as a publicity machine for Hollywood. On Saturday BBC2 even proudly mounted a double-bill (an Australian comedy with

romantic fiction, the terraced house of her childhood, and the site of her seaside holidays. A nice woman, a serious writer, for much of the time she was almost defiantly unphotogenic, cocooned in a dumpy coat and hat straight out of silent cinema. She was moving when she spoke of coming to terms with grief at the death of her son. At such moments the programme flickered wanly with a suddenly glimpsed sense of purpose. Otherwise to tell the truth, it was a mite dull.

It was a week when women linger in the memory. BBC1's *Hollywood Angel* looked at Sister Helen Prejean, the American nun who inspired the Oscar-winning film *Dead Man Walking*. She is obviously one of the world's – one hesitates to say "do-gooders", the phrase is so eroded by irony, but good and compassionate she is, with a cheerfully brisk, no-nonsense articulateness, and that under-

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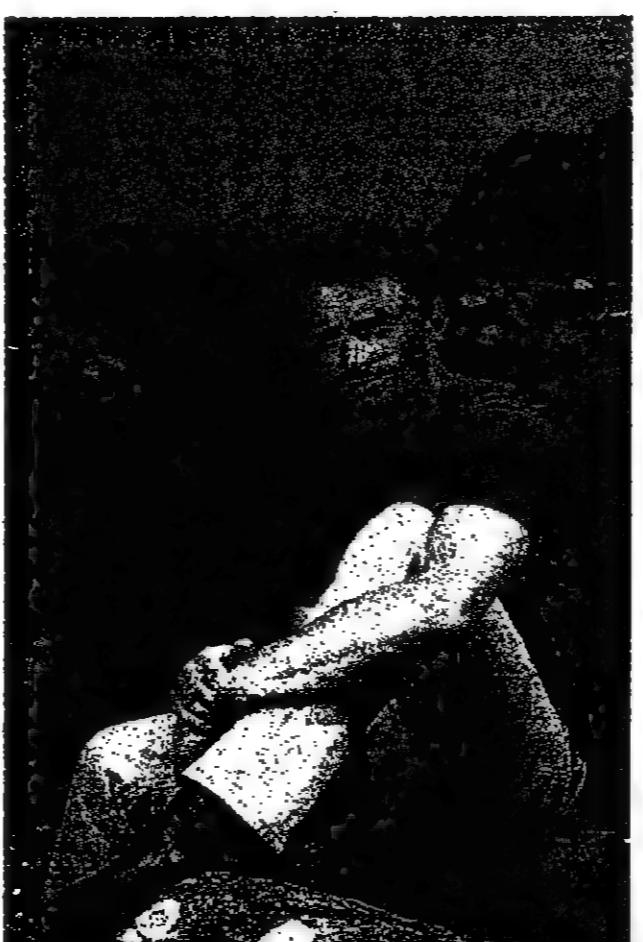
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An Easter Message

Throughout the bleak winter,
the last for many in our
care, the warmth of your
compassion was beyond
moral praise.
May your kindness be
blessed by peace and good
health during Easter and all
seasons.

Sister Superior.



Robert Carlyle as Hamish Macbeth: his little community is a cross between 'Whisky Galore' and a Gaelic 'Milk Wood'

Opposition is mounting to the mother of all chess matches, the 22nd Karpov v Kasparov International Chess Federation (Fide) world title series starting in Baghdad on June 1, where Saddam Hussein has promised to make the first move. The BCF has joined calls for an urgent meeting of European federations, and it has emerged that some members of the board are less than pleased at the near-unilateral decision of Fide's president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov to accept the offer from his personal friend Hussein.

Meanwhile, the world No 1 Garry Kasparov, who broke away from Fide, recovered from his poor start at VSB Amsterdam to share first prize: 1-2 Kasparov and Topalov 5½/9, 3-4 Anand and Short 5; 5-6 Kramnik and Lautier 4½; and four others. The result is good for Nigel Short, who missed a chance to beat Kasparov by a rook sacrifice, and splendid for the play of the 21-year-old Bulgarian Topalov (Topalov-Timman, Caro-Kann Defence).

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Opening fashions change: 3 Nc3, which used to be book here, has given way to 3 e5 popularised by Short and to 3 cxd5 (Kasparov). Bb4 Nf6 a5 Bb5 Nc6 Rb8 23 Qxe5+ Kf8 24 Qxf5 Qe7 25 Qg4 Nxe5 26 dxe5 Qxe5 27 Rb1 Qf4 28 Qh5+ Kg8 29 Rg1 Rg5 Rg3 30 Qh7+ Kf7 31 Qh6+ Kg7 32 Bg6+ Resigns.

No 1123

White mates in four moves, against any defence (by K. Junker). Earlier solvers have found this difficult.

Solution Page 11

Leonard Barden

BRIDGE

This year's annual encounter between the House of Lords and House of Commons was hosted, as always, by the English Bridge Union in London.

Recently, the balance of power has shifted to the Commons. This year, however, the Lords reassured themselves. This early board threatened disaster for the Lords:

N
♦ A 10 9 7 3
♦ 9
♦ K 10 4
♦ 8 5 4

W
♦ Q 8 2
♦ A 8 6
♦ K 10 7 3

E
♦ J
♦ 10 7 5 4
♦ Q 5 3
♦ Q J 6

♦ K 6 5 4
♦ Q 7 6 2
♦ A 9 2

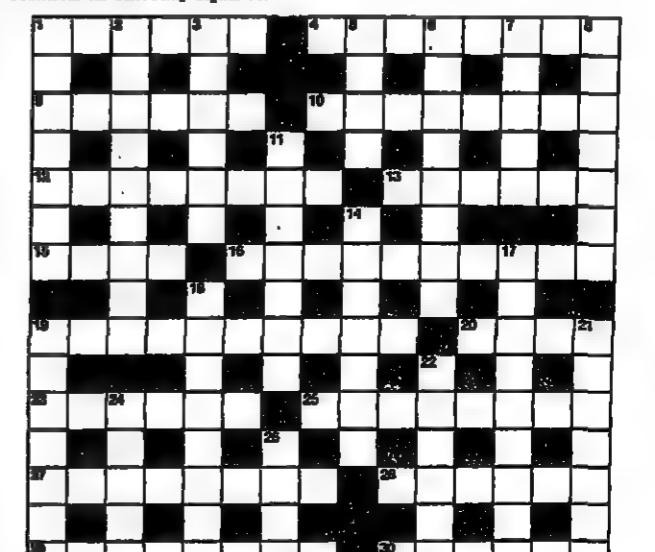
At three of the four tables in play, the Commons scored well, including 820 for 4D. Where the Lords sat North-South East (Michael Mates)

John Williams

CROSSWORD

No. 9,037 Set by CINEPHILE

A prize of a classic Pelikan Souvenir 800 fountain pen for the first correct solution opened and five runner-up prizes of £25 Pelikan vouchers. Solutions by Wednesday April 17, marked Crossword 9,037 on the envelope to the Financial Times, Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL. Solution on Thursday April 21.



BOOKS

Nothing more clearly symbolises Japan's tradition of concealing the unsightly than its attitude to lepers.

More than 40 years after most industrialised countries ended mandatory quarantine for lepers following the discovery of a treatment for the disease, Japan's 5,800 lepers are still shut up in remote colonies, some with excruciatingly euphemistic names like Garden of Fulfillment.

That situation is about to change. The Japanese government has just approved a bill to scrap the leprosy prevention law - under which lepers are obliged to live in colonies - and the new health minister, Naoto

Sympathy in a world of hostility

William Dawkins on a missionary who devoted her career to helping Japan's despised lepers

Kan has issued a fulsome apology to the sufferers. Within the next couple of months, the bill is likely to pass through parliament.

All this brings to a conclusion a campaign started in the late-19th century by a largely forgotten English missionary, Hannah Riddell. Her extraordinary life is recounted in a recently published biography by Julia Boyd, wife of Sir John Boyd, a recent British ambassador to Japan.

A forceful lady, who spent much

of her life trying to rise above her origins in a barracks in Barnet, Hertfordshire, Hannah Riddell set out for Japan in 1890 to make a career, more than - or so her colleagues suspected - to save souls. She soon spotted an opportunity in the treatment of lepers, an area where Japan was falling behind in its high speed Meiji era transformation from feudal to modern industrialised society. In the southern rural town of Kumamoto, where Riddell was based, she was saddened to see

HANNAH RIDDELL: AN ENGLISHWOMAN IN JAPAN
by Julia Boyd
Charles E. Tuttle £11.99.
215 pages

that lepers were confined to the grounds of a Buddhist temple.

After spectacular battles with the local missionary hierarchy, the strong-willed Riddell stamped

through the social barriers to forge friendships at the highest levels. With these contacts' help, she established one of the first modern leper colonies in Japan, in which inmates were treated with humanity and respect. Riddell was in her element running her Kaishun Hospital for lepers in Kumamoto, perhaps winning prestige and recognition that would have been denied in Britain.

By Lady Boyd's account, she governed with the affectionate firmness of a British public school matron.

Known as "Mother" by her fearful and yet adoring patients, Riddell was often seen being carried around Kumamoto in a litter, followed by her pack of small pedigree dogs. Sadly, Kaishun was destroyed by the military authorities - who thought it was a training centre for spies - just after the outbreak of the second world war. But she is still remembered warmly by the ladies of Kaishun Hospital.

They recently formed a memorial society to Riddell and her niece,

Ada Wright, who carried on the good work after Riddell's death in 1932. It was recognition of just how important the two Englishwomen were in destroying some prejudices. Without them, the ending of mandatory quarantine might have come about even more slowly than was the case.

However, this acceptance comes too late for the few surviving inmates of Kaishun and other Japanese leprosy sufferers. Few old peoples homes will accept them in the mistaken belief that leprosy is highly contagious. So they will stay where they are, drawing a very little comfort, perhaps, from the health minister's apologies and memories of old friends like the ladies of Kaishun Hospital.

God versus Evil through the ages

Hugh Dickinson on two books that seek to make sense of mankind's attitude to God and the devil

Suddenly Evil is stalking the land. It is Evil, apparently, which spoils a twisted personality and then manipulates him or her to perpetrate horrific acts. If the tabloids are anything to go by Evil is now regaining a personality of his own and sports a capital E on his name - an age-old attempt to keep up with God. He is emerging from the dungeon dimensions of the psychic world as a newly active agency. Satan is even getting a biography.

Of course in the strange paranoid subcultures of the sects, we expect to find an

native inner world of Western culture for more than 2,000 years. Most of the primal myths of our race, such as those from Mesopotamia, deal with the archetypal human experience of living in a world shot through with darkness and light. How does it come about that the world is so absurd? How do we or any human beings make sense of the grotesque agonies and glorious ecstasies of our condition, woven so inextricably together?

Devil: A Biography is an extended metaphor for a history of this age-old struggle to account for the darkness in a world in which we sense that light is truly the condition for which we are made.

The earliest religious myths were mostly monotheistic, attributing both good and evil to the random or inscrutable purposes of totally capricious gods. The classical pantheon is the most familiar example. The inherent amorality of the divine realm then becomes philosophically intolerable and some form of modified dualism consolidates into the rigid schematised structures of the medieval heaven and hell.

Stanford traces the fascinating interweaving of these myths and theologies from pre-Christian times, and describes in graphic detail their generally malign influence on culture, society and politics, through the Crusades, the Cathar Heresy hunts and the witch hunts of the 17th century. He takes a happy detour through Milton and the Romantics and lands us into the revivalist sects of the 18th and 19th centuries. All very interesting and well told.

But is there an enemy out there, envious, malign and cruel, who simply hates all goodness, beauty and truth? In Tolkien's great myth *The Lord Of The Rings* it is memorably personified as The Dark Lord.

obsession with demons. Many born-again Christians in the charismatic and fundamentalist wings of the Christian churches are as accustomed to the devil's malign presence as they are to the flu.

But there is still a deeply embedded superstition fear of the occult and the paranormal even in otherwise sane and sensible people. Peter Stanford was once editor of the Catholic *Herald* and admits that it was his own upbringing by kindly Catholic monks which enabled the image of the devil in his mind. But there are also masses of dechristianised folk out there who are convinced there is a force of evil trying to twist our lives.

The basic paradigm of good and evil, God and Satan, has been normative for the imagination of



Is there a malign enemy who hates goodness, beauty and truth? A traditional French illustration shows Satan destroying agriculture and the church.

who like Iago hates without a cause. Does Screwtape exist? Or are all these potent images simply corporate projections, metaphors, imaginative devices, which help us handle the archetypes of darkness within ourselves?

In two all too brief chapters right at the end, Peter Stanford turns to the psychiatrists rather than the priests. Among them there are a few voices who seem to be saying that from time to time they do meet a human being who is not just mad but truly evil without cause. The judgment is of course subjective, but it is one to which many priests would cautiously assent. The spine can still be chilled after all.

and the "mystery of iniquity" remains unresolved.

The search for Satan is one thing. The search for God is something altogether other, not only because there are two different authors - though not so different as they might be in this case - but because the nature of the quest for God is deeply existential. This Grail contains the mystery of being itself.

Like Peter Stanford, Paul Johnson has been imbued with the imagery of Catholic Christianity from his childhood. *The Quest For God* is subtitled *A Personal Pilgrimage* and is explicitly written to try and make coherent sense of a personal faith within the tradition

of the church, not only as a personal exploration but also as a potential guide for others.

As we would expect it is lucid, elegant and highly intelligent. It is also intensely personal. The reader has a sense of being written to directly: "Now, you may be thinking..."

"Now, you may say..." John covers the field of Christian belief quite systematically - Why believe in God? What alternatives have we? He or She? Evil, heaven and hell, other faiths, eternity and time. He concludes with some prayers of his own.

But there can be no doubt that the Roman Catholic Church is, and always will be, Johnson's spiritual home. Moreover, "I want everyone I love to be part of the church, because I am acutely conscious of the security and comfort, the stability and certitude, the happiness and the wisdom - yes, and the freedom - which being a Catholic has brought me. I want to share these gifts."

So the central problem of unquestionable authority and certitude remains unquestioned. Johnson engagingly admits his own psychological need for such a framework for faith. But it does seem as if the quest for God takes place only within a gilded cage. It is significant that the name of Thomas Merton does not appear in the index.

For his characters he took those about him, some now recognisable as past members of Conservative cabinets, life peers and broadsheet editors. For settings, episodes and narratives he used his own experiences, many shared and recognised by readers of his age to the point of halloinatory familiarity.

Towards its end the series

shows signs of effort and contrivance; the narratives are

trifly strained, a touch too

fantastical; characters

that had been plain

unpleasant, like smarmy boys

at school, are suddenly

malvolent.

But the seventh novel,

Sound the Retreat, retains all

the early vigour and controlled

complexity, its events peopled

with old familiarities whose

cousins, not even twice

removed, we know.

In its serious moments it

illuminates the government's

careless abandonment of India

too soon after the war, with

riot, religious bigotry and

mayhem the handmaids of

that freedom. In more

light-hearted vein it recalls the

tribulations and pleasures of

differences by proving their manhoods with assorted prostitutes and stratagems, much to the entertainment of all the other boys in the platoon.

Such a tale will never be a set text in English literature, though Raven's sense of the sinister steadily darkens the tale and brings it to its end with the death of Gilzai Khan, a wise and honourable Moslem captain in the Indian army. It is a predetermined execution, but not as planned - he is murdered by an English subaltern whom we suppose to have been, if not his lover, certainly the object of a more avuncular affection.

Raven's mischievous sexual humour irradiates the book. He catches the cadets at what John Aubrey, the 17th-century commentator, once described as masturbation, introduces stout Peter Morrison to joyful heterosexual sex with an adolescent chi-chi prostitute, and sets Gilzai Khan and Cadet Mortimer to settling their

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Crime/Christopher Hirst

Drugs, drag and psycho-babble

Murder in Scorpio by Martha C Lawrence (Hodder, £16.99).

Her protagonist, Californian private investigator Dr Elizabeth Chase has a propensity for extrasensory intuition and seeing auras. She also has a fondness for Zen macrobiotics and feels the "beginnings of post-traumatic stress syndrome" after a mind-run-in with the bad guys. It scarcely sounds highly of the Californian police force that hunky Sergeant Tom McGowan is obliged to call in this self-declared witch to help investigate the apparently accidental death of hamburger heiress Janice Freeman.

In the twinkling of a third eye, Dr Chase is analysing a computer generated cosmic map of the demise at the start of *Big Italy* (Gollancz, £8.99). Tommy Fox has just been promoted to a top admin post but, a copper to his fingertips, he is soon leading an investigation into a multiple-murder off the Cyprus coast.

BOOKS

Children's books

Creepy crawlies and other monkey business

Some will thrill to the tales of terror in the latest stories; for others there is gentler fare. By Carolyn Hart

Although you might sue the theatre now for frightening your children, no one has yet tried to do the same to children's publishers. Perhaps British infants, brought up on a diet of *Struwwelpeter* and *Ruthless Rhymes*, are immune to literary terrorism, but recently I wondered whether to try wringing some compensation out of David Pelham, whose *Sensational Samburger* (Cape) reduces my son to a heap of neurosis each time he sees it.

Luckily, David Pelham's latest book isn't nearly so frightening. *Creatives Creep* (Collins £5.99) sounds horrible, but is nothing more than a mild pop-up book in which owls, blink, foxes slink and ducks dip. Even so, you have to watch out for the crocodile on page 12.

Some of my son's favourite picture books rely heavily on the suspenseful build up of fear. *Shh!* by Sally Grindley (ABC £7.95), in which the reader, by means of peepholes and flaps, creeps closer and closer to the sleeping giant, is one of them. *Into the Castle* by June Crebbin (Walker £5.99) is similar. Here two children, a baby, a horse and a dog set off to investigate the castle on the hill: "They say a monster lives inside, but no, that couldn't be..." Crossing the creaking drawbridge, tiptoeing over the flagstones in the courtyard and down the cellar steps, they find a huge door with a heavy iron key. What's on the other side? Run! It's the monster. Shrieks of terror all round and, for the hapless adult, pleas for it to be read again and again.

There is nothing to fear in *Buzz Buzz went Bumblebee* (Walker £5.99), a delightful story by Colin West about an irritating bee who is told to buzz off by a variety of animals until he meets the Marilyn Monroe of the butterfly world: "Won't you buzz around with me?" she implores him.

Although Lars Harte's first novel, *First Time* (Phoenix House £14.99), was not intended for the teenage market, it is nevertheless a gripping portrayal of a 15-year-old girl stumbling, unprepared, into an adult world.

Middle class Dubliner Cassandra, anxious about the new school year, falls under the spell of Emma, a poor girl from Kilmore. Being tough and sassy, Emma wears make-up in school, sports a nose ring and has two smokes on Fridays to celebrate the end of the school week. With a learning curve like that, who needs homework, and soon Cassandra has abandoned books for the less subtle charms of cigarettes, boys and black eyeliner.

Not surprisingly, it all ends in disaster when Emma turns against her new protégé spreading mal-

infant life. By contrast, the dog in Benedict Blathwayt's new book, *Kip A Dog's Day* (Julia MacRae £8.99), is a working one, a responsible sheepdog who lives on a Scottish farm. Kip gets up early to round up the sheep, helps the farmer take them to the show and chases them when they escape, before settling down to a well-earned supper. In *Kip*, Blathwayt has more or less dispensed with words, relying instead on his fine, detailed drawings to tell the story.

Good picture books for older children - say 5-7 year olds - are often difficult to find, but they are a useful way of making the transition to wordier books. One worth investing in is *Seeing Red* by Sarah Garland (Andersen Press £8.99), a story about a resourceful little girl whose quick-thinking saves Britain from Napoleon's invading army. Brilliantly illustrated by Tony Ross, this is an inspiring tale involving complex notions about history, independence and bravery in the face of adversity.

*Joyce Dunbar's *Indigo and the Whale** (Frances Lincoln £9.99) explores the complicated business of finding one's own place in the world. A small boy from a sea-faring family longs to be a musician. "But we're fishermen," argues his father. "You can't eat tins." Armed with a magic pipe and in the company of sperm whales, the boy reconciles the two opposing forces in his life in this dreamy, thought-provoking book.

The Oxford Funny Story Book (£12.99) has 28 stories by writers as diverse as Bel Mooney, Richard Crompton and Jan Mark. Potentially hilarious situations include a kidnapping that goes wrong, a girl who hates washing, a romantic frog, and a sad pirate called Short Bob Silver and his sick parrot. Dennis Pepper edits this exuberant collection. For children over seven.

The mad, Mutley-esque dog in Adrienne Geoghegan's first children's book, *Dogs Don't Wear Glasses* (Maggie £5.99), is a superb invention: a long-suffering hound named Seymour whose hyperactive, short-sighted owner, Nanny Needles, spends a whole day getting things wrong and then blaming Seymour.

The star of Charlotte Voake's new book, *Mr Davies and the Baby* (Walker £5.99), is also a dog. Mr Davies is a fey scottish terrier who loves going for walks with a baby and its mother. Once outside the gate Mr D's delinquent tendencies come to the fore as he races about chasing cats and barking at cyclists. The baby loves Mr D but his mother is less enthusiastic. Much of the pleasure of this simple story lies in Voake's illustrations, which combine a scatty charm with an acute eye for the minutiae.

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PROPERTY

Which Portugal do you want to live in?

Mary Wilson looks at the cost of holiday homes and villas in a country with two distinct characters

The attractions of the Algarve, Portugal's popular south coast, are many - not to mention blue skies, sunshine, excellent golf courses and sandy beaches. If you are thinking about buying a second home there, it is possible to achieve a satisfactory rental return, so long as your property is in top condition and in the right location.

The Algarve is not short of property, either new or second-hand. Prices have stopped falling and certain price increases are over. Vendors of resale properties are beginning to nudge up their prices and new homes, for the first time in four or five years, are rising in value too.

"Prices have come up to an acceptable level," says Michael Carpenter, of Prime Property International. "And there is a very good choice. We have hundreds of properties on our books from under £100,000 to well over £1m."

The Algarve has two distinct characters. In the upmarket, developed areas you can live a civilised, sheltered life in an almost British community with your villa, pool and garden taken care of, for a price, so you are free to enjoy all our time there.

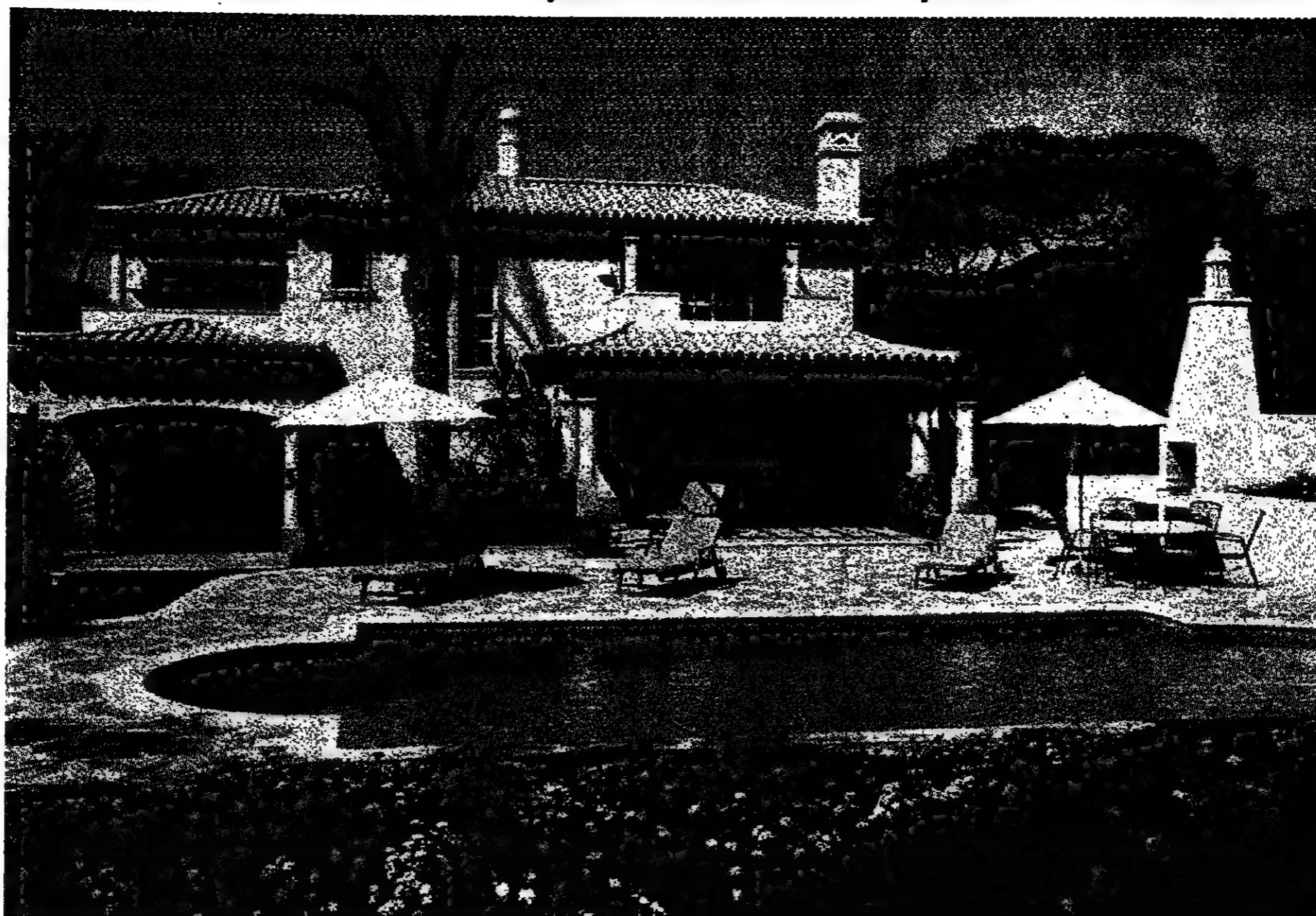
Or, you might choose to search the real Portugal and buy a villa in the orange groves in the hills, alongside farmers still working the land with donkeys and villages with cobbled streets and white-washed houses.

One of the biggest differences between the two, apart from the lifestyle, is the price. Villas in the new developments, such as Quinta do Lago, Vale do Lobo and Pinheiros Altos can be twice the cost of a villa home in the hills.

"Some purchasers do not really appreciate why I probe them gently as to what they are looking for," says Carpenter. "They say, just send me all the villas you have in the price range, but I need to know what sort of lifestyle they want to lead."

Nicky Charlesworth, of Hampshire, which sells both new and second-hand property, says that there is a trend for people to move back to the established developments. This is because of security and also the desire to live within easy reach of shops, restaurants and sporting facilities, "she says.

At Lakeside Village, one of Bovis' developments at Quinta do Lago, Hampshire is selling a five-bedroom



The show villa at the exclusive Pinheiros Altos development where the primary purchasers are Britons

double-storey detached villa overlooking the lake for £595,000. Far better value - if you prefer to be off the beaten track - is a six-bedroom villa with guest cottage at Alteao in the hills north-west of Loule on the market for £280,000.

In Carvoeiro, an unspoilt fishing village an hour from Faro airport, you can buy a three-bedroom detached villa in a quiet area of an

acre plot with private pool for £140,000. Prime Property International is selling several two-bedroom apartments on Quinta do Lago, priced from £115,000 to £125,000, and has recently sold a four-bedroom villa with pool there for around £260,000 including furnishings.

One advantage of buying a property on a big new development is that sometimes it is the only way to become a member of a particular golf club. At São-João, Bovis

other development, down by the beach at Quinta do Lago, low-built blocks of flats are going up in a private cul-de-sac, alongside one of the best golf courses in the Algarve.

"We are starting to build the last three blocks of the development this month," says Ann Mills, sales manager, "and once these have gone, the membership will be closed." Prices range from £28,000 to £230,000 for a three-bedroom apartment.

Another option is to buy a plot, although many people find it easier to buy something not yet built.

"You have so many decisions to make about its construction, the design and the finer details, that generally speaking people prefer something which is built," says Carpenter. Prices range from £28,000 to

BLOOMFIELD COURT, MAYFAIR

A second floor flat in a purpose built block in the centre of Mayfair behind Bond Street. Reception Room. 2 Bedrooms. 2 Bathrooms. Kitchen. Daytime Porter. Lift. Leasehold: £295,000

Mayfair Office: 0171 408 1161

GROSVENOR STUDIOS, W1

A rarely available low built house situated within this delightful gated courtyard approached from Grosvenor Cottages. Drawing Room. Dining room. Kitchen/Breakfast Room. 3 Bedrooms. Bathroom. Shower Room e/s. Utility. Cloakroom. Secluded Patio Garden. Leasehold: £950,000

Belgravia Office: 0171 235 8088

PARK LORNE, PARK ROAD, NW8

A bright seventh floor flat in a purpose built block with views towards Regents Park. Reception Room. 3 Bedroom. 3 Bathrooms. Kitchen. Cloakroom. 24 hour Portage. Car Parking. Lift. Leasehold: £525,000

Mayfair Office: 0171 408 1161

WILTON ROW, SW1

Individually designed town house set in an exclusive private road near Belgrave Square. Sitting Room. Dining Room. Master suite: 2/3 further Beds. Terrace. Patio Garden. Leasehold: £750,000

Belgravia Office: 0171 235 8088

HYDE PARK SQUARE, W2

A third floor apartment in an attractive period building overlooking an attractive garden square. Double Reception Room. 3 Bedrooms. 3 Bathrooms. Cloakroom. 24 hour Portage. Car Parking. Lift. Leasehold: £525,000

Mayfair Office: 0171 408 1161

ENNISMORE MEWS, SW7

3 storey house with flexible accommodation and potential for refurbishment. Reception. Dining Room. Kitchen. 4 Bedrooms. 2 Bathrooms. Terrace. Bathroom. Freehold: £650,000

Belgravia Office: 0171 235 8088

CHARLES STREET, MAYFAIR

A fine Grade II house recently refurbished with over 4,000 sq ft of accommodation. Drawing Room. Dining Room. Morning Room. Kitchen. 4 Bedrooms. 4 Bathrooms. plus Staff Flat. Roof Terrace. Leasehold: £1.49 million

Mayfair Office: 0171 408 1161

CHARLES II PLACE, SW3

A well designed townhouse within a modern development off the Kings Road. First floor Drawing Room. Dining Room. Conservatory. Kitchen. 3 Bedrooms. 3 Bathrooms. Cloakroom. Patio Garden. Integral Garage. Porter. Security Gates. Freehold: £690,000

Belgravia Office: 0171 235 8088

DTZ Debenham Thorpe Residential
0171 408 1161

Mayfair Office:
42 Brook Street
London
W1A 4AG
Fax: 0171 408 2768

Belgravia Office:
116 Ebury Street
London
SW1W 9HQ
Fax: 0171 823 1013

INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY ADVISERS

Skiing
Reluctant snowman

Nicholas Woodsworth, against his will, has fun in Kandersteg

BANX



I assumed Kuensi he had to be kidding - if I managed to stay upright at all I might do 50m in about two weeks.

But, as I found myself admitting over the next few days, the great thing about cross-country skiing is that you can do it quite happily at any level - from the simple trudging pace that I began with, to the more extended and energetic movement of the experienced skier, to the fluid skating motion that has the experts flashing past and out of sight before you even notice them.

And, for a novice like me, an even greater thing about the trails of Kandersteg is that the slower one skis, the more time one has to notice the world around.

Some trails wound about through the village itself. A year-round resort, Kandersteg also remains an active farming community. I enjoyed skiing past wooden farmhouses where the smells of the barnyard mingled with the fragrant odours of cabbage cooked with cumin, past fields where shaggy ponies rolled in snow, past dairy farms where metal milk churns hung beneath icicle-draped eaves.

Despite the snow all about them, it was warm enough for ducks to splash about in the Kander River, for trout to fin their way through clear water under its wooden bridges.

Kandersteg had its wilder side, too. High above the village through pine forests, accessible only by a chairlift ride and a winding piste through the woods, lay the frozen alpine lake of the Oeschinensee. Surrounded by towering cliff faces that appeared and disappeared, mirage-like, through shifting cloud and winter haze, frequented in winter only by lonely ice-fishermen, it is a sublime place for cross-country skiing. On the day we slid across its frozen surface it was as wild as Lapland, as uninhabited as Siberia.

Is there a difference between the Oeschinensee and other, ruder parts of the northern world? On the way down, the chairlift attendant wrapped a red rug around our knees. In the valley below waited a crisp white Swiss wine and a cheese fondue dinner, a Bach organ concert in the steeped church beside the Hotel Victoria, and soft eiderdown duvets to drift away in.

My wife may just be right, after all. Snow can be fun. ■ *Nicholas Woodsworth's stay in Kandersteg was arranged by Intratour, specialists in European cross-country ski holidays, Hockwold, York YO6 4JZ, tel: 01653 622811, fax: 01653 622741.*

INTERNATIONAL ARTS GUIDE

What's on in the principal cities

ADELAIDE

EXHIBITION
Art Gallery of South Australia Tel: 61-8-2077000
● Arthur Streeton 1867-1943: retrospective exhibition of the art of the Australian landscape painter Arthur Streeton. The display features works from throughout his career, including his early impressionist work, his later, large rural landscapes and his views of Sydney Harbour; to Apr 14

AMSTERDAM

CONCERT
Concertgebouw Tel: 31-20-5730573
● Amsterdam Loski Stardust Quartet perform Spanish court music by La Spagna, 16th century dances, canciones and fantasias; 11am; Apr 7
● Nederlands Kamerorkest: with conductor Hartmut Haenchen, soprano Barbara Schlick and alto Katarina Karnasova perform works by Van Wassenaer, Pergolesi and Locatelli; 8.15pm; Apr 10, 13, 14
EXHIBITION
De Nieuwe Kerk Tel: 31-20-6268168
● The Buddhas of Siam: exhibition showing art treasures of Thailand. Among the exhibits are several buddhas and works expressing the life of Buddha; to Apr 15
OPERA
Het Muziektheater Tel: 31-20-5518117
● La Bohème: by Puccini. Conducted by Heribert Haenchen and performed by De Nederlandsche Opera. Soloists include Roberto Aronica, Paul Whelan, Ainhoa Artaza and Lucio Gallo; 8pm; Apr 8, 11, 14 (2.30pm), 16, 18

ANTWERP

CONCERT
De Vlaamse Opera Tel: 32-3-2336808
● Galina Stamenova, Morris Powell and Andrew Wise: the violinist, horn-player and pianist perform Brahms' Sonata for Violin No.3, Op.108; Sonatasatz and Trio in E flat, Op.40; 0.45pm; Apr 10

ATHENS

CONCERT
Athens Concert Hall Tel: 30-1-7282333
● Matthäus Passion: by J.S. Bach. Performed by La Camerata, Orchestra of the Friends of Music, the Cappella Istroupolitana, the Städtische Konzertchor Düsseldorf and the Boys' Choir of the German School of Athens, conducted by Miltiades Cariola. Soloists include soprano Ute Seibig, alto Daphne Evangelopoulou, tenor Kimon Vassilopoulos and Jorg Hering, bassist Rudi Holl, Robert Holzer and Christopher Stamboglis, organist Rudolf Scholz, harpsichord-player Katerina Kiona and cellist Aristeia Gandsi; 7.30pm; Apr 7, 8, 9

ATHENS (USA)

EXHIBITION
Georgia Museum of Art Tel: 1-706-542-6325
● From Bonnard to Toulouse-Lautrec: Avant-Garde Printmaking in France in the 1890s; this exhibition provides an opportunity to see prints by artists who helped create the publication *L'Estampe originale*, of which the museum owns a rare, complete set, and from which most of the prints on view originate. The show explores the ways in which *avant-gardists* in France in the 1890s brought their concerns about contemporary art and life to the print medium. Artists include Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard, Maurice Denis, Paul Gauguin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Signac and Mary Cassatt; from Apr 14 to Jun 16

ATLANTA

CONCERT
The Fabulous Fox Theatre Tel: 1-404-881-2000/892 5685
● Isaac Stern, Jaime Laredo, Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax: the violinist, viola-player, cellist and pianist perform works by Brahms, Mozart and Dvořák; 8pm; Apr 9

BALTIMORE

EXHIBITION
Baltimore Museum of Art Tel: 1-410-396-6310
● Ancient Nubia: Egypt's Rival in Africa: exhibition of 300 objects from ancient Nubia, from the collection of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania. Works in ceramics, stone, ivory and bronze trace a 3,600-year history of Nubia and give a perspective on its volatile relationship with Egypt. Nubia both influenced and was influenced by Egypt culturally. Eventually Nubia conquered Egypt, creating the largest state ever to exist along the Nile (c.2-65BC); to Apr 14

BERLIN

CONCERT
Konzerthaus Tel: 49-30-203090
● Valery Almazov: the pianist performs Beethoven's 11th Bagatelles, Op.119, 6 Bagatelles, Op.126 and 33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op.120; 7.30pm; Apr 10
Philharmonie & Kammermusiksaal Tel:



Detail from 'The Parasol', 1777 by Goya, on show in Oslo



Nicholas McGegan, conducting in Cardiff

49-30-2614383

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49-30-261



James Morgan

Biggles and the bleating bulldog

Those were the days – of modesty, responsibility and British stiff upper lips

Last week's charity has turned cold. *Le Figaro* in Paris sneered that the mad cow affair had made Britain seek help from Europe "in the name of the dream it had refused to back and a solidarity it had derided". *Figaro* was not alone.

But few would accuse the British press of solidarity. Its leading tabloid, *The Sun*, was uncompromising. "We may appear to have more cases of BSE than France," it said, and it was right. The British 161,000 do in a sense appear more than the 13 French.

But, *The Sun* told us, that is "because we are more honest: The French secretly bury their cases". The *Daily Express* quoted a British

vet who said they called BSE "JCB disease". In Britain a JCB is an earth-mover and corpse burier. But "JCB disease" translates strangely: *maladie de l'engin de terrassement* must flow uneasily from the mouth of the British dairy farmer who provides the *Express* with its news.

From *The Sunday Telegraph* we learned of more iniquity. A Euro-subsidy to help Britain cull cows would be treacherously "clawed back". The editor told us that Europe's Common Agricultural Policy was the real villain of the affair. An accompanying article expanded on Euro-trickery – the writer said he once saw a Flemish farmer mixing angel dust, whatever that is, with his animal feed.

Back in *The Sun*, the former cab-

inet minister, Lord Tebbit, proclaimed that BSE stood for "Britain Stuffed by Europe". The latter told tales of schoolboys who could, with a piece of string and a catapult, save their friends from certain death at the hands of Neptune or a Fuzzy-Wuzzy.

Biggles and Henry were not, as the shrewd reader will have deduced, politically correct. But they knew what it meant to be British. It meant taking the blame, even when unfairly blamed; it meant no recriminations, it meant quiet modesty, accepting responsibility for one's actions, relying on oneself to get out of a mess, and it meant not talking about money.

In a politically correct world, everyone has the right to be a victim. Everyone has the right to

other people's money to compensate for self-inflicted wounds. And patriotism is to bleat about foreigners whose sole aim is to do us down.

Today Sir James Bigglesworth, MC is the Conservative Member of Parliament for Derring & Plinck. In a speech to the House on Mad Cow day he said: "We are faced today with a crisis of our own, albeit unwitting, making. It may have been exacerbated by foreigners but we must not judge that the actions they have taken conform with their national interest. And we accept that these have saved us from the humiliation of seeing Salvadorean meat one day and Somalia the next.

"We all recognise that mistakes,

quite innocently, have been made. We shall overcome their consequences as we have overcome other crises in our long history by ourselves, and with our own resources. If that means sacrifices, so be it. If that means lifting burdens from the few and placing them on the shoulders of the many, so be it. If there be guilty men let them come forward – but we seek no scapegoats. This may not be our finest hour, let history not judge it our least worthy."

This, of course, is pure fiction:

who would have voted for someone who could spout such nonsense and so flagrantly undermine his country's interests?

■ James Morgan is BBC World Service economics correspondent.

Cows and mad veggies

My first flight in an aircraft was as a 22-year-old national service man bound from England for Cyprus, then in the last stages of British rule.

I remember the flight mainly, however, because it cost me my virginity as a life-long vegetarian. The chicken lunch served to the troops was so delicious that I have relished chicken and meat ever since.

My mother, who had supervised my vegetarianism, would have regretted my betrayal of what she saw as a clean, ethical and superior way of life.

She had also instilled in me a deep distrust of orthodox medicine – when ill we always consulted a popular Lancashire herbalist – and it was another year after eating chicken before I bravely popped my first aspirin.

On diet and doctoring we were for years regarded as cranks by relatives and friends. In retrospect, though, my mother was a woman ahead of her time. Many of her attitudes on meat eating and health care have become highly fashionable.

Sensitivity and amateur dietetics were at the root of her vegetarianism. She never forgot her distress when as a young girl she took hen to be put to the knife.

So when she married my father, already a veggie by conviction, she had no difficulty in embracing his credo. It was rooted in the progressiveness of the age, part of a nexus of thought which embraced socialism, theosophy, eugenics, naturalism and a general belief in the onward march of mankind.

My mother's heroes were George Bernard Shaw and Gandhi. She was less proud of the fact that Adolf Hitler was also a flesh abstainer. But she used to mention his name, too.

Our faith was buttressed by a subscription to the *Vegetarian Messenger*, a monthly medley of reci-

Interview

A real life in front of a screen

Peter Aspden
meets Sherry
Turkle to talk
about the
Internet effect

Meet Julia, who will be your companion for the evening. She will not be devoted exclusively to you, for she believes in spreading her affections. It is part of her charm. She also has a snappy line in quips and plenty of attitude. On a good day, she can even fool you into thinking she is human.

Julia is a computer programme, or more accurately a 'bot', strutting her stuff on the Internet. She connects from her Pittsburgh base to the online community indistinguishably from a human player. Players can talk to her, she talks back. She functions by looking for particular strings of characters in messages typed to her, and answers back appropriately. She is also able to admit ignorance and if confused, changes the subject.

Many rational, intelligent human beings spend hours in front of a screen talking to characters like Julia. Of course, they do not have to be themselves: they can be a man posing as a woman, an apparently docile character trying out some wild sexual fantasies, an alien from another planet.

Another computer programme, DEPRESSION 2.0, is trying to help people cure their psychological problems. They talk to the machine about their needs, the computer is programmed to respond. They go away feeling refreshed, unburdened. If they need another perspective, they can go online and talk it through with fellow net-surfers. Who needs real human contact?

Such is virtual life on-screen: compelling, seductive, full of limitless possibilities. According to Sherry Turkle's new book, *Life On The Screen*, it is an exciting way of re-defining ourselves as the millennium draws to a close. To others, it is a high-tech hell on earth.

I met Turkle just after she had endured a tough session on the BBC's *Start The Week*. "I am feeling very defensive. Everyone was talking about this terrible addiction, how it is all like a drug, and I'm just sitting there slightly jangled..."

A rare pause in her fluent, fast-speaking conversation. Surely you can understand people's worries, I asked.

"Of course, but I think it all has to do with how a thing looks in its early days. If we had set up this interview by telephone, we wouldn't be sitting here saying, 'My God we were in the virtual reality of a telephone conversation'. We are pretty comfortable integrating telephone calls with real life because we are used to it.

"People talk on the Internet, then they set up a coffee date in the real, then they go back. I could say to you, who are in my physical life,



Sherry Turkle: It is part of her argument that computer culture is making more concrete the way in which our lives have become fragmented

I asked her about the depression programme and of the use people made of the Internet to try to solve their personality problems. Didn't some people who coped happily on the Internet find it hard to switch back to real life?

"I call it the *Cyrene effect*. He went into the virtual reality of letter writing. He won the girl, but he could never believe he was the guy who wrote the letters," she said.

Yes, it did happen, but there were also plenty of positive experiences. "The people who do best are the people who approach it with all the tools of self-reflection and self-observation that they bring to anything."

But wasn't talking about your problems to a computer rather sad?

"Even 10 years ago people thought it was obscene. But now the common reaction is – can I try it? People are no longer comparing it with talking to an analyst, but with self-help books, and it looks a lot better."

Then how about sex on the Internet (known as *TinySex*)? Was this a good idea? It surely wasn't very wholesome – Turkle writes in the book of the fierce debate among the online community on "virtual rape" – projecting a rape fantasy on to a victim via messages on screen.

A long pause, and for the first time she measured her words very carefully. "Whenever there is a new technology, its first use is for some form of sexual expression or stimulation. All we are talking about is people typing dirty to each other. A lot of things are happening online, and some of it is people writing erotic messages."

"But is it any worse than phone sex? Or dirty movies? Or having promiscuous sex in the age of AIDS?"

She said sex on the Internet made people think afresh about ideas such as infidelity and jealousy. "Some people don't mind if their partner just does it on screen. My favourite position, because I think I identify with it, is the one which says, 'I can understand one night in a motel room because she's more beautiful, she's younger, whatever – but talking to someone eroticly. That's the best part, the most intimate part'."

I asked her how much time she spent in front of her screen.

"Like most people, most of my working life is spent on screen. And for research purposes I join all kinds of online groups. But I do lots of other things."

Did she still go to cafés?

"I love going to cafés, but I don't kid myself. If you are trying to capture the good old days by going to a café called Bonjour Croissant in the middle of a mall, and get served by someone wearing a fake French beret, I mean that is not Paris."

"If you offer me that experience versus going online to a virtual community where a group of people have been talking about the sex of common themes over the past six months, I know which feels more 'real' to me."

"Look, I am a humanist. I am very sympathetic to people's worries. I am glad to meet you here in person and that we are not doing this interview by fax. I am on the side of the angels. But there is something positive going on here."

Holidays were usually at a vegetarian guest house run by a Quaker couple

pes, horror stories about meat eating and cruelty to livestock, news about great vegetarians throughout the ages, and adverts for vegetarian hotels, guest houses and camps.

The meatlessness pervaded my early life. During the second world war, our meat rations were replaced by extra eggs and cheese coupons. (Fortunately, we did not practice Vegetarianism, which abhors both eggs and dairy foods.)

Daily dinners at Bury Grammar School, Lancashire, invariably contained meat. They seemed so awful that my class mates envied me lunching at home every day.

Holidays were usually at a vegetarian guest house run by a Quaker couple, Kate and Arthur Ludlow, at Crich, south Derbyshire. Unlike many other such establishments, the food was ample and tasty, dominated by nut and lentil preparations.

Decades before muesli became a household word in Britain, we were tucking into cereals, raisins, almonds and hazelnuts drenched in syrup.

In addition to a sprinkling of Jews and Moslems anxious to avoid eating the wrong kind of meat at any price, most of the other guests were progressive school teachers from Sheffield, Nottingham or other northern cities who liked nothing more than a tramp in the Peak District. Local villagers used to call us the "Ludlow Loonies" or "Plus Fours and No Breakfast".

I particularly remember a wonderful old man called Louis Beethoven Prout, a fanatic advocate of the theory that Francis Bacon was William Shakespeare. A mine of information on our daily rambles, he could identify every flower and plant in the hedgerow. And there was a gorgeous Persian lady, called Rozhanak Purkash, whose beauty was as unforgettable as her name.

My diet followed me to Oxford University, although here the faith began to tire a little.

To cater for my oddity, the college butler dutifully purchased meatless sausages for me at a health food shop at the bottom of the High Street. They were awful, a fact which no doubt prepared me for my conquest by chicken at 30,000ft.

That was more than 30 years ago. The world has turned turtle. There is at least one vegetarian alternative in nearly every hotel and restaurant in the land. The Financial Times' canteen's Christmas menu last year offered Nut Wellington. And now, to cap it all, butchers' shops are deserted, McDonald's, pending supplies of Dutch beef, advertised veggieburgers, and doctors are competing with hordes of homeopaths, acupuncturists and herbalists. My mother would have approved.

Maurice Samuelson

Quickstep to the Olympics

Alice Brickwood describes her lifelong affair with ballroom dancing

forms of solitary disco dancing that removed all etiquette and structure, seen by some as liberating. I think it is a tragedy.

Now the old art, which survives mainly in societies and clubs, is becoming popular again, especially after the hugely successful film, *Strictly Ballroom*. The number of dance schools in the UK has increased enormously during the last five or six years to more than 8,000. At Cambridge University, where I gained a half blue in dancing, the largest society, with more than 2,000 members, is the Cambridge Dancers' Club.

In recognition of its popular appeal and 14 years of lobbying, ballroom dancing is likely to be given full Olympic status next year, after completing a two-year probationary period.

Last week there was much discus-

sion about the fact this would bring with it the rather sad requirement of random drug testing. Drugs such as amphetamines, steroids and diuretics are unlikely to be taken by ballroom dancers. But caffeine is also prohibited. This will be a big problem. A day's competition, with all of the qualifying rounds, may last more than 12 hours. While waiting to be called, we drink vast quantities of tea and coffee.

I started dancing as a young girl for purely romantic reasons. My father bribed my brother to partner me. Jason was a rare breed: he gave me three evenings a week and the weekends, on coaches full of mothers and hair spray being shipped to competitions.

As I got older, the main objective was to find a man. The man always leads on the dance floor, and the lady, as in the famous quotation

about Ginger Rogers, has to do everything the gentleman does, only going backwards and in an arc.

But despite all the excitement of competition, one of the most enchanting aspects of dancing is now, as it was for Elizabeth and Natasha, going to the ball.

The Christmas balls of the Cambridge club were always the most luxurious of the dancing year. With an expectant heart, a new gown and a man in black tie at our side, we would step from our carriages into a room filled with the magic of a past era. About 600 dancers are spiralling round. For five hours the music plays. The cluminess of an inexperienced partner is all forgiven in the pleasure of walking in the arms of a man you care for.

From time to time a god of the dance floor appears. In my years, he was tall, proud, athletic and German. He merely stood in front of you to present his arms; words were unnecessary. Dancing with him was like floating – one scarcely dared to breath. When he danced Latin, he was with the most beautiful woman, it was impossible to keep your eyes off him – he was arrogant and proud, truly masterful.

As in every sport, dancers must start at the beginning and in Cambridge that came in the form of Glennis and Robin's Absolute Beginners classes. You did not need a partner to go there and after each dance, you changed partners. And so it was rocky enough then to find myself on the university team, dancing waltz with a talented and charming man, Sydney. Dancing on the team gives you a regular partner and weekly private lessons. But we spent up to 20 hours a week in

practice. Syd and I were delighted to win the first of our competitions. These were more terrifying than I remembered them as a child. But we had the hair spray on the coach just the same.

Then came the Varsity Match: with amateur training and intricate steps, choreographed for the waltz, quickstep, jive and cha-cha. We also learned to "walk-on" and how to apply the fake tan. The top eight couples are selected only the night before the competition so emotions run high. The top couples from Oxford, but only the top ladies from Cambridge partnerships, can be awarded a half blue. For, unlike the Olympics committee, the Cambridge University Men's Blues Committee does not think it is a sport.

Now I have a job, it is less easy to find opportunities to dance. One of my favourite places in London is the Palm Court at the Waldorf Hotel, which holds tea dances at the weekend. Only a few young dancers go there, but the room is always packed for tea. So, this weekend the Waldorf, in a few years, perhaps, the Olympics in Sydney.

مكتبة من الأرشيف

■ Results due next week

Company	Sector due	Dividend (p)		
		Amount	Last year	This year
AMEC	EMI	Thursday	1.50	1.50
Albion Group	EMI	Friday	-	0.20p
Alpha Alloys	SpGr	Wednesday	1.00	1.00
Chance	NA	Wednesday	-	-
Dowmunt Group	Text	Tuesday	0.65	2.00
Edie Nodd	Eng	Thursday	0.50	0.40
Henderson Am Cap & Inv Trst	EMI	Tuesday	-	-
Intermarket Capital Group	Off	Wednesday	3.75	7.50
Moore Bros Group	Refn	Wednesday	3.00	5.00
Nordic & Pacific	Refd	Thursday	2.16	2.27
Rathbone Brothers	Off	Thursday	3.00	6.00
Reco	EMI	Wednesday	-	-
Robt Reid	Edita	Wednesday	1.00	4.20
Sandy Fleming Group *	FinP	Wednesday	-	2.40
Smart Jefferson Group *	PP&P	Wednesday	0.014	0.038
Stewartlow	Text	Thursday	2.70	3.50
TRADER Network	AM	Friday	-	-
Trotter & Daniels	Eng	Tuesday	-	-
Tutor	Edita	Thursday	-	0.50
Turner & Co	Chem	Wednesday	2.00	4.50
Wade Group Holdings *	PP&P	Thursday	-	1.25
Murray VCT	Off	Wednesday	-	-
Prescott Ridge	EMI	Thursday	-	-
Tayo & Co	Text	Thursday	-	-

Dividends are shown net pence per share and are adjusted for any intervening scrip issue. Reports and accounts are not normally available until about six weeks after the board meeting to approve preliminary results. \dagger 1st quarter. \ddagger 2nd quarterly. \star 3rd quarterly. $\#$ Split dividend. \diamond Yearly dividend. \ddagger Irish punts and pence.

■ Last week's interim results

Company	Sector	Half year to profit (£'000)	Pre-tax	Interim dividend*	
				per share (p)	per share (p)
BMI	Eng	Jan 2,440 (2,120)	3.0	0.10	0.10
Benson Group	Eng	Nov 3,000 L (2,000)	-	-	-
Bucco	EMI	Dec 100 L (140 L)	-	-	-
Chalker Group & Co	EMI	Jan 622 L (140 L \ddagger)	-	-	-
Cox Insurance	Insr	Sep 373 (+)	-	-	-
Ex-Lands Prop	Prop	Dec 872 L (901)	-	-	-
Frangie Estates	Prop	Dec 6,010 (7,000)	4.1 (4.0)	-	-
Hallcrest (Lemnos)	Edita	Dec 4,000 (4,700)	3.25 (3.0)	-	-
Hightech Distillers	AM	Feb 22,200 (20,700)	2.0 (1.8)	-	-
Ind Biotechnology	Intr.	Feb 12,000 (9,700)	-	-	-
Lloyd's Chemists	Retn	Dec 25,000 (25,000)	3.1 (2.9)	-	-
Lyon's Irish & Co	NA	Mar 4,500 (4,240)	7.5 (7.35)	-	-
Motronics	Eng	Jan 21,000 (20,000)	6.0 (5.8)	-	-
Old Mutual S Africa G	Intr	Feb 1,987 (1,987)	-	-	-
TR For Best Income	Intr	Feb 182.8 (148.8)	1.8 (1.8)	-	-
Trace Computers	SpGr	Nov 80 (223)	-	-	0.55
Waddington Secs	AM	Nov 150 L (170 L)	-	-	-

(Figures in parentheses are for the corresponding period.) Dividends are shown net pence per share, except where otherwise indicated. Liosios: \ddagger Net asset value per share. \ddagger Irish punts and pence. \ddagger 26-week figures. \ddagger US dollars and cents. \ddagger Second interim: makes 3.2p due. \ddagger Compares for 12 months. \ddagger Compares for 8 months. \ddagger Compares for 38 weeks. \ddagger Special distribution. \ddagger Foreign income dividend. \ddagger Compares for 38 weeks. \ddagger 7-month figures. \ddagger 18-month figures. \ddagger After tax. \ddagger Includes special of 1.5p. \ddagger Includes special of 0.74p.

■ Last week's preliminary results

Company	Sector	Year	Pre-tax profit (£'000)	Earnings*		Dividends*
				per share (p)	per share (p)	
2 Smaller Group Co	Intr	Feb 160.2 (180.8)	5.17 (5.73)	4.62	0.88	-
Afroso Lakes	Net	Sep 1,000 L (1,000)	-	0.14	-	-
Alta Controlling	Eng	Dec 5,000 (3,700)	3.9 (2.2)	2.2	2.2	-
Benton Group	Edita	Dec 34,500 (30,000)	2.5 (1.7)	1.5	1.5	-
Bersani & Co	Intr	Dec 133.0 (111.8)	4.45 (4.08)	3.1	3.1	-
Bossons	PP&P	Dec 16,000 (16,000)	34.04 (32.49)	14.3 (13.0)	-	-
Brackley	Edita	Jan 351 (341)	-	0.31	-	-
Broadway	Edita	Dec 2,000 (2,000)	0.22 (2.00)	0.15	0.15	-
British Drilling	Edita	Dec 1,810 (2,000)	0.35 (0.24)	0.18	0.18	-
Britten Estate	Prop	Dec 20,100 (20,000)	11.35 (10.34)	6.7	6.7	-
British Services	Prop	Dec 1,000 (700)	0.83 (0.68)	0.40	0.40	-
Brown & Root	Edita	Dec 1,000 (1,000)	0.55 (0.48)	0.28	0.28	-
CA Group	Intr	Dec 4,000 (3,500)	7.05 (6.71)	5.10	5.10	-
CEG IFC	Intr	Dec 1,000 (1,000)	0.25 (0.25)	0.12	0.12	-
Color Group	Edita	Dec 35,000 (35,000)	14.5 (13.1)	12.5	12.5	-
Comcast	Intr	Dec 4,220 (2,700)	1.46 (1.08)	0.75	0.75	-
Computer Resources	Prop	Dec 10,000 (10,000)	5.3 (5.4)	2.25	2.25	-
Constar Group	Edita	Dec 334 L (337 L)	-	0.21	0.21	-
Citrus Coopers	Edita	Dec 2,520 (2,500)	2.8 (2.7)	1.4	1.4	-
City Centre Rest	PP&P	Dec 15,500 (14,100)	5.81 (5.01)	3.25	3.25	-
Chadwick Group	Prop	Dec 4,000 L (5,100)	0.55 (0.48)	0.28	0.28	-
Clyde	Text	Dec 5,220 (5,200)	13.34 (14.17)	4.4	4.4	-
Country Services	AM	Dec 1,000 (900)	0.25 (0.25)	0.12	0.12	-
Cryc & Rose	Edita	Dec 41 L (41 L)	-	0.14	0.14	-
Cybernetic Metals	Prop	Dec 1,100 (1,000)	0.14 (0.14)	0.07	0.07	-
Deacone Ind	EMI	Dec 1,000 (1,000)	0.04 (0.04)	0.02	0.02	-
Recruit Properties	Prop	Dec 1,000 (900)	0.33 (0.31)	0.16	0.16	-
Proforce	Edita	Dec 15,000 (15,000)	4.25 (4.18)	2.25	2.25	-
Five Arms Group	Intr	Dec 360.0 (360.0)	5.9 (4.0)	0.8	0.8	-
GEC IFC	Intr	Dec 1,710 (1,600)	2.7 (1)	1.5	1.5	-
Genex Engineering	Eng	Dec 1,000 (900)	2.03 (2.00)	1.00	1.00	-
Gibraltar Group	Edita	Dec 4,000 (4,000)	1.12 (1.00)	0.50	0.50	-
Glendale	Edita	Dec 1,000 (1,000)	0.04 (0.04)	0.02	0.02	-
Goodwin	Edita	Dec 1,000 (1,000)	0.04 (0.04)	0.02	0.02	-
Hanover Ind	Edita	Dec 31,000 L (30,000)	12.1 (12.0)	6.0	6.0	-
HIC	Intr	Dec 1,000 (1,000)	0.25 (0.25)	0.12	0.12	-
Industech	NA	Dec 5,000 (5,000)	4.53 (5,011)	2.25	2.25	-
Innovatech	Edita	Dec 9,000 (8,000)	0.22 (0.22)	0.11	0.11	-
Int'l Tel & Tel	Text	Dec 7,000 L (7,000)	1.26 (1.2)	0.62	0.62	-
JOA	Edita	Dec 6,700 L (6,700)	0.31 (0.28)	0.15	0.15	-
Jones	Edita	Dec 500 (500)	1.12 (1.12)	0.56	0.56	-
Arach Group	Edita	Dec 11 (700 L)	-	0.14	0.14	-
Laid Group	Edita	Dec 9,000 (9,000)	2.00 (2.00)	1.00	1.00	-
London & Manchester	Intr	Dec 57,000 (54,000)	2.00 (2.00)	1.00	1.00	-
MC Pacific	Intr	Dec 10,700 (10,700)	1.44 (1.43)	0.72	0.72	-
Marine-Genetics	Edita	Dec 7,000 (7,000)	4.37 (4.12)	2.05	2.05	-
Monte Carlo	Edita	Dec 1,000 (1,000)	0.14 (0.14)	0.07	0.07	-
Penzer's Group	Edita	Dec 170 (170 L)	1.26 (1.1)	0.62	0.62	-
Perseus & Sons	PP&P	Dec 32,000 L (31,000)	1.00 (1.02)	0.50	0.50	-
Principals	Edita	Dec 2,000 (2,000)	0.12 (0.12)	0.06	0.06	-
Proforce	Edita	Dec 1,000 L (1,000)	0.12 (0.12)	0.06	0.06	-
Redwood Metal	Edita	Dec 1,310 (1,310)	0.49 (0.49)	0.25	0.25	-
Reynolds & Peacock	Edita	Dec 4,000 (3,200)	10.36 (7.62)	5.2	5.2	-
R						

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OFFSHORE AND OVERSEAS

BERMUDA (SIR RECOGNISE)

GUERNSEY (STB RECOGNISE)

IRELAND (SIB RECOGNISED)

IRELAND REGULATED

- ISLE OF MAN (REGULATED)

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MANAGED FUNDS NOTES

These are in process underwritten insurance instruments and those depicted 5 are not. Please refer to U.S. dollars.

5% above for all buying expenses.

Value of certain older insurance linked plans subject to local parts can be stated.

Foreign and CSN managed. The regulatory authorities these funds are:

- Canada - National Monopoly Authority
- France - Autorité des Assurances et de la Crédit
- Germany - Federal Council of Insurance
- Italy - Comitato di Controlla
- UK - Financial Services Compensation Scheme
- USA - Financial Services Department
- Switzerland - Insurance Luxembourg
- Other - Change made on sale of units.

Buying price - Bid or redemption price.

Selling price - Offer or issue price.

The total return alongside the fund manager's fee is the sum of the fund's valuation point unless calculated by one of the following methods:

- 1990 = 1990 units
- 1991 = 1990 units
- 1992 = 17000 units
- 1993 = no midpoint

Exit charge on sale of units.

Manager's periodic charge deducted from capital.

Historic pricing = Past Fund pricing

Distribution free of UK taxes.

Periodic premium insurance plan.

Single premium insurance.

Designated as a UCITS (Uncertainties for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities).

Offered price includes all expenses except agent's commission.

Previous day's price

- Guaranteed gross.
- Nett before Jersey tax.
- Ex-redemption, rd - Ex-redemption
- Only available to insurance bodies
- This column shows associated costs of NAV

These prices on these pages are also available on Internet at www.csn.com

AMERICA

US equities mixed ahead of March data

Wall Street

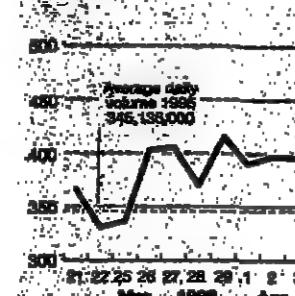
US equities ended the week in a mixed fashion on Thursday as investors held positions ahead of the three-day weekend that was due to see the release of March unemployment figures, writes Lisa Bransten in New York.

By the close of the session the technology-rich Nasdaq composite had edged up 2.36 at 1,118.21 to pass its previous record of 1,117.79 set on February 23.

Blue chip shares in the Dow Jones Industrial Average were

up 1.75 at 3,000.40.

APM/AMM



off 6.66 at 5,682.88 and the Standard & Poor's 500 had slipped 0.02 to 855.86, while the American Stock Exchange composite added 2.78 at 577.10. Volume on the NYSE came to 382m shares.

Bonds exerted some negative pressure on shares. Late in the session the benchmark 30-year Treasury was off about a half a point as traders prepared for the March unemployment figures that were released yesterday.

The stock market was closed yesterday in observance of Easter, but there was a half day's trading on the bond market. Both markets will be open on Monday, and with the bond market reacting negatively yesterday to the better-than-expected jobs data a sell-off in equities was being anticipated.

FT/S&P ACTUARIES WORLD INDICES

The FT/S&P World Indices are owned by FT&S International Limited, Goldman, Sachs & Co. and Standard & Poor's. The Indices are compiled by FT&S International and Goldman Sachs, in conjunction with the Royal Institute of Actuaries and the Institute of Actuaries. NatWest Securities Ltd. was a co-founder of the Indices.

NATIONAL MARKETS

	US	Day's	Local	Local	Gross	US	Day's	Local	Local	Year
show number of lines	Dollar	Change	Yen	DM	Currency	Div.	Sterling	Yen	DM	Index
Australia (61)	188.46	-0.1	188.16	188.30	188.28	188.11	0.0	4.11	188.78	188.56
Austria (64)	185.46	-0.1	177.60	184.61	184.61	184.22	0.0	1.54	185.71	178.52
Belgium (24)	208.98	-0.1	203.3	186.62	186.62	186.62	0.0	4.19	212.22	204.03
Brazil (28)	154.32	-0.1	149.65	154.85	154.85	154.75	0.0	1.57	154.32	154.70
Canada (100)	188.0	-0.1	188.0	188.0	188.0	188.0	0.0	1.57	188.0	188.0
Denmark (15)	174.80	-0.1	188.11	188.11	188.11	188.11	0.0	1.58	188.11	188.11
Finland (24)	174.80	-0.1	188.32	188.32	188.32	188.32	0.0	2.00	174.77	188.94
France (98)	196.32	-0.1	180.29	184.59	184.59	184.59	0.0	3.01	186.85	182.59
Germany (80)	173.08	-0.1	167.38	173.57	173.57	173.57	0.0	1.98	173.34	186.22
Hong Kong (56)	435.54	-0.1	425.27	425.88	425.88	425.87	0.0	3.84	426.58	426.56
Ireland (16)	267.57	-0.1	268.1	268.24	268.24	268.24	0.0	3.40	267.35	268.51
Italy (58)	73.18	-1.1	73.18	73.18	73.18	73.18	0.0	1.52	73.18	73.18
Japan (49)	180.88	-0.2	180.88	180.88	180.88	180.88	0.0	1.73	184.34	184.32
Malta (17)	525.98	-0.2	525.98	525.98	525.98	525.98	0.0	1.51	525.98	525.98
Mexico (18)	1214.85	-0.1	1178.11	1252.21	1252.21	1252.21	0.0	1.58	1214.05	1252.15
Netherlands (16)	220.22	-0.1	217.14	222.70	222.70	222.70	0.0	5.18	220.55	223.51
New Zealand (18)	61.78	-0.1	79.31	65.59	65.59	65.59	0.0	4.35	79.25	79.25
Norway (33)	259.02	-0.1	259.02	259.02	259.02	259.02	0.0	2.01	259.02	259.02
Singapore (44)	252.18	-0.1	252.18	252.18	252.18	252.18	0.0	1.58	242.97	242.97
South Africa (45)	370.21	-0.1	359.2	261.18	261.18	261.18	0.0	2.05	359.2	261.18
Spain (37)	173.72	-0.2	168.47	178.00	178.00	178.00	0.0	1.58	173.72	178.00
Sweden (46)	237.36	-0.2	227.16	229.16	229.16	229.16	0.0	2.50	236.61	227.57
Switzerland (28)	247.37	-0.1	180.10	180.03	180.03	180.03	0.0	1.54	187.47	187.17
Thailand (48)	185.72	-0.1	185.72	185.72	185.72	185.72	0.0	4.05	182.59	182.59
United Kingdom (204)	232.87	-0.1	228.48	228.24	228.24	228.24	0.0	2.18	225.57	225.57
USA (52)	257.57	-0.1	257.57	258.88	258.88	258.88	0.0	1.54	258.57	258.88
America (775)	244.14	-0.0	238.75	185.84	185.84	185.84	-0.0	2.18	244.13	208.06
Europe (723)	208.68	-0.1	204.07	141.75	141.75	141.75	0.0	3.05	202.67	141.22
Nordic (125)	188.77	-0.1	188.77	188.77	188.77	188.77	0.0	2.02	188.77	188.77
North America (625)	185.04	-0.1	179.45	185.15	185.15	185.15	0.0	2.04	184.85	178.28
Europe-Pacific (1965)	185.04	-0.1	182.31	177.15	177.15	177.15	0.0	2.17	201.02	206.05
North America (729)	252.91	-0.1	252.91	174.35	174.35	174.35	0.0	2.03	252.91	174.35
Europe Ex. UK (519)	190.42	-0.1	184.64	182.83	182.83	182.83	0.0	2.03	190.42	182.83
Europe Ex. Japan (291)	251.17	-0.1	251.17	242.74	242.74	242.74	0.0	2.04	251.17	242.74
World Ex. US (1747)	203.04	-0.1	190.54	184.49	184.49	184.49	0.0	2.02	202.72	184.00
World Ex. UK (2)	203.04	-0.1	202.72	142.00	142.00	142.00	0.0	2.01	206.81	142.00
World Ex. Japan (1083)	242.33	-0.1	236.05	184.61	184.61	184.61	0.0	2.01	242.33	184.61
The World Index (2376)	211.20	-0.1	204.81	143.48	143.48	143.48	0.0	2.18	201.98	204.77

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LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE: Dealings

Details of business done shown below have been taken with consent from last Wednesday's Stock Exchange Official List and should not be reproduced without permission.

Details relate to those securities not included in the FT Share Information Service.

Unless otherwise indicated prices are in pence. The prices are those at which the business was done in the 24 hours up to 5 pm on Wednesday and sent through the Stock Exchange Telfer system, they are not in order of execution but in ascending order which denotes the day's highest and lowest dealings.

For those securities in which no business was recorded in Wednesday's Official List the latest recorded business in the three previous days is given with the relevant date.

† Bargains at special prices. ♦ Bargains done the previous day.

British Funds, etc

Treasury 12½% Sks 2000/03 - £122½

£212½

Corporation and County Stocks

London County 2½% Cons Sks 1992/for after -

£27½ (24/08)

Birmingham 2½% Sks 1992/for after -

£27½ (24/08)

Birmingham Corp 3% (1992 1992/for after) -

£32½ (24/08)

Birmingham Corp 3½% Sks 1994/for after -

£38½ (24/08)

Birmingham Corp 3½% Sks 1995/for after -

£38½ (24/08)

Birmingham Corp 3½% Sks 1996/for after -

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Birmingham Corp 3½% Sks 1999/for after -

£38½ (24/08)

Birmingham Corp 3½% Sks 1999/for after -

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FINANCIAL TIMES

Weekend April 6/April 7/April 8 1996

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0500 62 62 26

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21 New Street, Birmingham B3 2AA. EC4M 2BD Registered No. 2222

Birds stranded in Belgium after closure of investment company

UK stops ostrich farming scheme

By Clay Harris in London

British ostrich farmers yesterday offered homes to thousands of birds stranded in Belgium after the UK government's closure of a controversial investment company.

Ostriches have become a chic alternative investment in recent years for people enticed by promises of huge guaranteed returns and the hopes of a growing appetite for meat other than beef.

The ostriches are owned by individual investors who paid the Ostrich Farming Corporation up to £17,700 (\$25,000) per bird to breed and sell them in Belgium.

The Department of Trade and Industry this week appointed the Official Receiver as provisional liquidator of OFC, based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. OFC is believed to have taken in millions of pounds in recent months.

The DTI said the company had promised returns of more than 50 per cent by guaranteeing a number of offspring per ostrich and agreeing to buy back those chicks after a year for a predetermined price. OFC arranged for the ostriches to be kept and bred on several Belgian farms.

Britain has an estimated 10,000 ostriches on 350 farms. Two of

£500 per bird, even after a recent rise in interest as the result of BSE, or "mad cow disease".

A number of people associated with OFC, including Mr Brian Ketchell, managing director, had been members of Alchemy, a pyramid investment scheme closed down by the DTI in 1994. Mr Ketchell was not available for comment.

Minister seeks to limit EU slaughter demand _____ Page 4

the enterprises - Wye Valley Ostriches in Wales and The Ostrich Centre in Swansea - said yesterday they would offer OFC investors rescue schemes for their birds.

Ostriches' popularity as an investment has been based more on breeding profits than the value of leather and meat at slaughter, estimated at about

Mr Alan Bloomfield of Shefford described how OFC had flown him and other potential investors to Belgium in November to see a farm near Ghent. He bought one young breeding female for £6,000 and, later, a three-month-old chick for £1,400. Before it was closed, OFC was offering ostriches described as "super-breeders" for up to £17,700.

Mr Bloomfield said OFC had guaranteed five chicks in each of the first two years, nine in the third year, and 12 in the fourth. When each was one year old, OFC guaranteed to buy it back for £500.

Mr Bloomfield would receive an increasing number of chicks, up to 24 in the eighth year and each year afterwards, until his original bird was 25. OFC also guaranteed to buy these chicks when they were a year old, but only at "market price".

"There was no hard sell," Mr Bloomfield said. OFC was open about the fact that ostriches did not qualify under the Investor Protection Scheme. He was encouraged by the fact that some investors were already receiving payments.

Several UK farms also promise guaranteed returns. Wye Valley, however, does not.

Japan Tobacco faces first damages claim from smokers

By Emiko Terazono in Tokyo

The first lawsuit brought by smokers against Japan Tobacco, the state-owned company that dominates the country's cigarette market, has been launched this week.

The action by five Japanese - four smokers and one non-smoker - has created new concerns for JT and for the finance ministry, which had hoped to bolster state revenues by selling much of its 81 per cent stake later this year.

Until now, JT has had the advantage over overseas competitors of a relative lack of litigation from smokers.

The current litigants are demanding a ban on production and Y1m (\$9,350) each in compensation. The amount is small by the standards of JT, which made Y15.3bn in recurring profit last year from brands such as Mild Seven and Seven Stars and is the sole Japanese producer. But the case could prompt other legal challenges and comes when the company is under pressure on other fronts.

New restrictions were imposed

this month on sales of cigarettes through the country's vending machines, which can now operate only from 11pm to 5am instead of a 24-hour service. Consumers can still buy tobacco at all-night convenience stores.

In contrast to the US, where tobacco companies face litigation from consumers and individual states, the case prepared by Mr Shizuo Ito - a lawyer based in central Japan - is the first in which smokers have sued JT.

In the past 10 years, the country's courts have rejected three suits by non-smokers against the company claiming their health had been harmed by cigarettes.

The four smokers, who smoke 40 to 80 cigarettes a day, claim they are addicted to nicotine and blame the company for not warning consumers of the health hazards of smoking. Japanese cigarette packs carry only a small warning on the side which tells consumers to "be careful about smoking too much" and to watch their manners when smoking.

The subdued message angers Mr Ito. "Even a child knows that smoking is bad for the body," he said, but acknowledged he was

battling Japan's most powerful bureaucracy, the finance ministry.

He noted that, while the ministry of health and welfare has raised the dangers of smoking in various reports, it cannot fight the finance ministry, which controls the budgets of all government ministries.

"The government should really be looking out for the health of the people," he said.

Apart from the law on vending machines, restrictions imposed on cigarette sales include an unofficial ban on cigarette advertising during the day to avoid attracting the attention of children.

But even if the government has managed to limit consumer fears about the health hazards of cigarettes, it has not managed to dilute many investors' fears over JT shares.

Tokyo's financial community remains the stock market turnaround caused by the listing of JT shares in 1994. The ministry was planning to sell a third of the company, but 40 per cent of the shares were left unsold, sending stock prices down sharply.

Rise in US jobs signals firm growth

Continued from Page 1

report. "This is probably the most important number of the second quarter, so you can't miss this," said Mr Richard Gilhooley, chief global bond strategist at Paribas Capital Markets in New York.

Employment gains have averaged 206,000 a month in the first quarter of the year, well above the 138,000 registered in the second half of last year. But the rate of job growth is still much lower than in 1994 when signs of overheating prompted the Fed to raise interest rates.

The job gains were also uneven. Employment increased by 131,000 in service industries last month. But manufacturing companies added 62,000 jobs. Only half of these losses stemmed from a strike at General Motors, suggesting many manufacturing companies are still facing sluggish demand.

The strong employment report follows other signs of more rapid growth, including a 1.3 per cent gain in the index of leading indicators in February - the largest in 20 years.

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